

‘H.K.’  
HIS REALITIES  
AND VISIONS

---

NEHEMIAH  
CURNOCK







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‘H. K.’

HIS REALITIES AND VISIONS

BY

NEHEMIAH Curnock  
" "

London

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## P R E F A C E

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The *nom-de-plume* 'H. K.' was invented for the author by his friend and first literary chief, the late Dr. Benjamin Gregory.

It may add interest to these studies if I explain that all the

. Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
And youths and maidens gay

who cross this mimic stage are real persons, though renamed. Their sayings and doings, their sorrows and joys, are realities.

Commonplace the actors and their plays may be ; but each reality, however trivial, has its answering vision in the unseen world of thought and hope and love.

NEHEMIAH CURNOCK.

RAYLEIGH, ESSEX,  
*January, 1907.*

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‘H. K.’

## HIS REALITIES AND VISIONS

‘FIRST’

**L**AST Sunday morning our minister preached in his own pulpit, with hymns and lessons and prayers all suitable to the occasion. Not the least striking feature in a service worthy of a new beginning was the sermon. Its text I will here print, because it may fitly serve as a New Year's greeting for the Methodist people in every city, and in every village also, wheresoever their lot is cast—

‘TO ALL THAT BE IN ROME, BELOVED OF  
GOD, CALLED TO BE SAINTS : GRACE TO  
YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER,  
AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.’

Of the sermon I have nothing more to

say, except this, that a work-worn journalist who chanced to be sitting by my side punctuated the preacher's Amen, with the whispered remark, 'You have a preacher who gives you something to think about.'

For two reasons I refer to this Covenant Sunday service. It gave the motto-text on which, as it seems to me, every Methodist can preach his own sermon; and, incidentally, it gave the word which stands at the head of this chapter.

Many years ago my dear old friend Moody drilled me in a habit that grows stronger with the passing years. He used to say, 'You should never go to church without a Bible; and let it, if possible, be your own Bible, the Bible you read at home, the Bible dear to you by sacred memories.' Moody had a theory that if a preacher found his people habitually bringing their Bibles to church and using them, the habit would react wholesomely, inducing him more frequently to refer his hearers to the words of Holy Scripture in their proper places, and thus cultivating in himself the

habit of expository preaching, and in them the habit of Bible study.

On Sunday morning, venturing a preliminary visit to the vestry to greet my pastor, the church-going Bible—an India-paper Revised—rested in its wonted Sunday-morning place under my arm. The preacher, in presence of the two Society stewards, did a strange thing. He blessed the Book, taking it into his hand and fondling it lovingly—one more memory added to a volume that year by year is growing more precious. When the preacher announced his text I read it in its place—Rom. i. 7. And instantly there flashed out the opening word of the next verse—‘FIRST.’ The word blazed, spoke, thrilled. I could not get away from it. Point by point through the sermon it sounded out like the pealing of a great far-away bell. Again and again it drew me to the open page. At home, when a long-scattered family gathered around the dining-table, Paul, servant of Jesus Christ, whispered in my ear, ‘First.’ In the Covenant service it came over and

over again. Through the pleasant hours of a memorable Sunday evening, and finally in dreams of the night, the word came—now a solemn tolling, now a triumphant clangour, and now a jubilant chiming, the message of the bells of God:

'FIRST, I THANK MY GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR YOU ALL, THAT YOUR FAITH IS PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD.'

The word stands alone. It is not a preacher's 'First.' There is no 'second.' Those who, even with some of the more recent and scholarly expositors, imagine that Paul used the word conventionally, putting into it a numerical value and nothing more, miss, as it seems to me, the significance of a unique method of emphasizing a momentous truth. It is an illuminated initial word. It is a great underscoring of a fact dominant above everything else. As with the blast of trumpets the faith of a Christian people is proclaimed. Surely something to thank God for! These saints, whether



in ancient Rome or in modern Methodism, may not be so saintly as might be. They may be children in knowledge, and not men in wisdom or holiness or courage. At many points they may need correction, warning, instruction in righteousness. Nevertheless, here is the broad, strong, rock-fact—they hold the faith; they have a definite experience; they know Him whom to know is life eternal; they know Him whom Paul served, promised afore in the Holy Scriptures, born of the seed of David according to the flesh, declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. How wonderfully Paul lingers over the great foundation truth! If I may reverently use the expression, he takes it to himself, fondling it as the minister fondled my Bible; for is it not everything to him, and must it not be everything to them, his dear friends whom he has never as yet seen in the flesh, and must it not be everything to us also? ‘Even Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we received grace and apostleship,

unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for His name's sake: among whom are ye also, called to be Jesus Christ's: to all that are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints.' How curiously and with what wealth of suggestion does St. Paul reiterate words and phrases—'called to be an apostle'—'called to be Jesus Christ's'—'called to be saints.' Open your Greek Testament. Look at the word thrice used. Trace its history. Think of all the meaning that has gathered around it and its allies, and you will gradually come to understand what 'the election of grace' is, and how great is the calling of those who are at once children of God and servants of His Son Jesus Christ.

Have you ever seen a living Foraminifer? It is beauty, mystery, simplicity, complexity. Its story goes back to the roots of the ages, to the beginnings of mountains, to the foundations of cities and empires. Certain of its forms remind me of such passages in the writings of St. Paul as we have now been reading. The Foraminifera belong to that

order of life known as the Protozoa. Does not this truth scintillate and throb in the first verses of the first of all the Epistles? Does it not stream forth—protozoic life of all theology and all Christian experience? In plain English, we are here face to face with that which, in the language used by St. Paul, is known as First Life.

Looked at with the unaided eye, a Foraminifer is a minute speck of chalk. Placed, in a friendly environment, under the microscope it will presently envelop itself in a glory of pure living light. If you are rough, wrathful, impatient even, the short-lived beauty will fade away. If you are gentle and kindly, and if all your treatment of the mystery is true to nature, there will be displayed a wonder that will enkindle some such feeling as John experienced when he gazed upon the living creatures before the throne, and heard the anthem of Creation.

A Foraminifer consists of a number of little chambers. In the species of which I am thinking they are arranged nautilus-fashion in the convolutions of a shell, all the

chambers being pierced with holes, and therefore communicating with one another, and with the outside world. All these cells are filled with life in its purest and simplest form. This life, as you silently watch, streams forth until the morsel of crystalline chalk shines like a radiant star with a corona of living light.

Is not this a slight picture of the phenomena in these verses? Here, also, are the chambered cells, the convolutions, the perfect communion between cell and cell, the delicate beauty of the external framework, the Life—simple, yet profound beyond the grasp of human mind, the streaming forth of the one First Life from every cell until we behold Truth in its purest, profoundest, and yet most elemental form. It is in reading over and over again, with concentration of thought and devout emotion, a passage like this that we realize, to some extent, the glorious fullness of meaning in those words of St. John, which are the Protozoa of the Gospels: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word became flesh (and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.’

What is the first, most precious, most foundational, the absolutely indispensable fact in every Church and in each individual member of each Church? Is it not this gospel of God concerning His Son, through whom we receive grace, to whom we belong, without whom no matter how elaborate our organization or how splendid our gifts, we are nothing? This is ‘the faith’ which, whether it fills the churches with wondering crowds or empties them, is to conquer the world and draw all men to their Lord and Saviour. Dr. Forsyth is perfectly in the right. What we all need for the revivifying of personal



experience and for the fulfilment of our true task as the bond-servants of Jesus Christ is this First thing, this 'positive gospel.' Let the preachers preach Christ Jesus the Lord as the sinner's personal Friend and Saviour; and let people and preachers themselves have a life hid with Christ in God, and this year shall be a year for immeasurable thankfulness. Every chambered cell will be perfectly adapted to its needs, and will be filled with life in its purest, simplest, divinest form; and the inter-communication between cell and cell will be perfect; and if there is a peaceful environment and no wrath or clamour of evil speaking rudely shaking the delicate structure, the divine life will flow out through a hundred orifices, each one a mark of beauty and a means of helpful grace to the structure as a whole, and to the outside world; and thus will it continue to be true of us as it was true of our fathers in the old time—

The gift which He on one bestows

We all delight to prove;

The grace through every vessel flows,

In purest streams of love.

In us the first and most elementary of all God's covenants will be fulfilled—‘I will bless thee and make thee a blessing.’ And the blessing will store itself through the procession of countless ages for the enrichment of an unknown future. The Foraminifera are falling in silent gentleness to the floor of the Atlantic, and God, as of old, is laying the beams of His chambers in the mighty waters, and is slowly building new mountains out of which, millenniums hence, new cities to dwell in may be built fairer than the fairest cities of the past. We Methodists are but one species of the vast order of spiritual Foraminifera. Let us glance swiftly back upon the mystic past of our life-history. And then let us gaze, with cleared vision and an earnest intentness, upon the present ‘calling,’ linked as it is with a world-wide mission and with a divine far-off future.

My friend! You may be a young girl, or a hard-driven office clerk, or a farm labourer. You cannot to-day read the New Year's message I am going to write. Buy

or borrow James Hope Moulton's *Greek Grammar for Bible Students*, as hundreds of working men are doing, and never rest until you have learnt to read the beautiful words written by St. Paul—

Κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, . . . ἀγαπητοῖς Θεοῦ,  
κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.



## PICTURES

THE Boy and I retreated from the rain into an omnibus. His metropolitan geography was rude and amusing. He knew not whither he was going, but surmised that some day, with practice, he might find his way about the City. The omnibus landed us in a river of mud and traffic before the mouth of Bond Street. With trustful simplicity and without a question he followed, until, at 175, we turned into the 'Modern Gallery.' Then, with birds and snakes and butterflies around him, he awoke, radiated, and recited 'Wild Nature' by the yard. He was a new creature. On venerable saints he had gazed with awe, but at sight of an adder coiled, and another stretching itself through the glinting grass, he kindled into enthusiasm. Wesley's House, the new Mission House,

City Road Chapel, and the Book Room he regarded with befitting solemnity ; but into the faces of Cherry Kearton's kittiwakes and owls and blackbirds he laughed merrily. Toasted tea-cakes, fairly well buttered, set up a rivalry, but not for long. Solan geese, the streaked lightning of an ichneumon's tongue, and the rain-drops on a sitting mother-bird's wing cancelled effectually the memory of gastronomics.

On the Gallery walls there may be a hundred photographs, and not a poor one in the lot. They are variously printed, in carbon some, in bromide others, and no two are precisely alike in tone. There is no death or terror or unsightliness anywhere to be seen ; all is life and health and peace. Did the creatures know of a surety that a friend, who would rather lose his right hand than be guilty of cruelty, had engaged the Sun to paint their portraits ? They sit serenely, or feed their babies unconcernedly, or walk with dignity towards their nests, or lift their wings for flight, or actually stand with posed heads to be photographed. In

one picture 'Brer Rabbit' comes to his front door to have his portrait taken.

The pictures are all framed and glass-fronted. On many of them little red stars appear, which means that visitors have bought them, or copies like them. One of the smallest in the Gallery, half hidden in a corner, has more red stars than any other. It is a photograph of two white butterflies which, with folded wings, have fallen fast asleep clinging to the petals of a white composite flower. In the night the dews have fallen. You can see hundreds of dewdrops jewelling the butterflies and their bed. When the sun rose and had kissed away the tears of the night, the butterflies opened their wings and flew away.

It is worth miles of tramping over Yorkshire moors or through London rain-storms to hear Richard Kearton tell stories of the birds, whilst Brother Cherry flashes them on the screen, and ever and anon cries of the wild birds break the silence of the night. One sits dreaming of Yorkshire farmers, and local preachers, and gamekeepers; of the

Dales, and the moors above Bolton Woods, and of Beamsley Beacon, with grouse calling and the curlews crying.

You may think it odd, to the point of eccentricity, but another picture gallery, in every way different, interweaves itself with Kearton's birds in all my present thoughts. This second gallery came to me four days later. It contains about the same number of pictures, and in their own way they are just as wonderful, though I doubt whether the boy would think so.

They are the printed pictures of chapels, halls, and schools in the Report of the Chapel Committee.

Many of the thoughts and emotions kindled by the Kearton birds are re-kindled by these Hornabrook pictures. I call them by that name for convenience' sake. Mr. Hornabrook is present-day Secretary of a Committee which for fifty years past has sat every month in Manchester helping all the churches in English Methodism to build, and to build aright, and to pay for what they build—feeding the young life, fighting all

manner of foes, helping young churches in their flight into the sunlight where God is; yes, and helping their songs also. If I were to name all the people who have helped in this holy and beautiful work, I should fill pages. Mr. Hornabrook will forgive me if I use his name for all the rest.

I look at these Hornabrook pictures. Some of them are, to me, redolent of woods and gardens and farmyards; others recall mills or mines, or stately city streets, or the 'thundering shores' of places to which we scatter for summer holidays. But every picture has its tale, its romance, its angel-recorded story of struggle, of heroic Hope beating back traitor fears, and of sacrifice. There have been months, sometimes years, of planning and managing and wise oversight and judicious feeding, not infrequently interspersed with needful nest-cleaning or repair; and at last the end has come in a burst of song and a picture in this Hornabrook gallery. Or, if not a picture, then a line in a mighty list, for there are really hundreds of chapels, and lovely Sunday

school houses, and splendid mission halls, and cosy manses, to say nothing of organs and mendings and enlargings of old nests. Everybody cannot have a picture—otherwise, instead of one volume there would have to be half a dozen.

This is the question I want to ask, How comes it to pass that this hard and costly work has been done, and done so well ?

How did these Kearton brothers get their bird pictures and their stories? By love and patience and hard thinking ; by waiting and watching ; by the ‘good luck’ that somehow in this world always attends people who have souls as well as bodies, brains as well as bank-notes, and who, in a passion of enthusiasm, throw their souls into their work and make all the impossibilities fly like stones under the wheels of a motor-car. They are mad on birds and nature and all living things, and the birds and even the insects know it. If they did not love their work with a deathless devotion, do you think they could wait for hours curled up in holes or oxskins, or standing waist-deep in



water, or swinging above the green, white-crested waves over the edge of a crag at the end of a fowler's rope?

In the Manchester Central Hall, high above the places where the lost sheep of the house of Israel are being sought and saved, there is a beautiful room hung with portraits of bygone secretaries and treasurers, where thousands of difficult problems in circuit work have been wrestled with and conquered. Once or twice, as a great favour, I have been allowed to sit in that room and watch. I have looked into the faces of men from Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Shropshire, and have said to myself, 'They stand for thousands of ministers and stewards and trustees in the circuits, and how worthily they represent them! How they love their work! How proud they are of it! What patience, minute care, tender-heartedness, resoluteness! They have been at it for fifty years. Where are the debts—the old writhing, wiry debts by help of which the devil thought of strangling our dear old Methodism? And what are the results?'

As I sit thinking and picturing things that I know to be facts, I hear the song of the Methodists in crowded town and sweet far-away village—

These temples of His grace,  
How beautiful they stand !  
The honour of our native place,  
The bulwarks of our land.

Experience tells me that the mightiest force in the battle with difficulties, in managing cranky people, in working one's way through crowds of impossibilities to a triumphant end, is Love. It is Love that can wait, and labour, and carry loads, and face peril and suffering with shouts of joy ; Love that opens the eyes and makes dull folks bright and lazy people alert. Let a little knot of village Methodists fall in love with 'the cause,' as they call it, and they will say to one another, 'Us be goin' to have a new chapel,' and having found the will they may be trusted to find the way.

Let me add one word. Everything that tends to foster love in a church or in any other public community, still more in a home



among boys and girls, is so much gain to the cause of God, and so much loss to the devil. And do not despise the little things—small friendships, love of nature, enthusiasm for books, or birds, or beasts, or butterflies ; love for the house, the school, the class, the thousand and one homelinesses that give Methodism its charm.

It is an old, old lesson, often repeated, but not yet worn out, thank God!—

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me,  
To walk together to the kirk  
With a goodly company !

To walk together to the kirk,  
And all together pray,  
While each to his great Father bends,  
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
And youths and maidens gay !

Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell  
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest !  
He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small ;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all.

## FOLLOWING

**I**N every Hymn-Book is a song that comes to us from long ago, and that everybody likes to sing. It has two great thoughts—‘Come’ and ‘Follow.’ It was written to be sung antiphonally—that is to say, by two voices or two choirs of voices, one, in each verse, asking a question; the other answering. A choir on one side of the church sang—

Art thou weary, art thou languid,  
Art thou sore distrest?

and a choir on the other side answered—

Come to Me, saith One, and, coming,  
Be at rest.

If you read the hymn through to the end, you will find that each verse is built on the same plan. A question is followed by an answer. The question is asked by the coming sinner, or on his behalf—the sinner

who, in his sore distress, needs a Friend, a Friend who has Himself suffered, a crowned and conquering Friend, One who will never leave, never fail, no, not even when all else passes away—

What His guerdon here?  
What hath He at last?  
Will He say me nay?  
Is He sure to bless?

And the answer is given by the witnessing Church on behalf of the dear Lord whom she knows and loves so well—

Many a sorrow, many a labour,  
Many a tear.  
Sorrow vanquished, labour ended,  
Jordan past.  
Not till earth, and not till heaven  
Pass away.  
Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs,  
Answer, Yes!

I often hear the hymn sung in this way, and the effect is not only very beautiful, but instructive and impressive. Is not this the one reason why, instead of simply reading them, we chant Psalms and sing hymns, that they may mean the more to us, and that their memory may linger in our hearts,

as the fragrance of musk and lavender and roses lingers in drawers and boxes ?

We must remember that antiphonal singing is ancient, so also are refrains and choruses and other simple devices in worship, by means of which the meaning of words was brought out and impressed upon the memory. Miriam and Moses so taught Israel to sing ; David also. The masters of sacred song in days when by the waters of Babylon harps were taken down from the willows and re-strung for use in the great processions, did not disdain similar musical devices. What floods of new and loveliest meaning would be thrown upon portions of the Bible now obscure if school masters and mistresses would be at some pains to discover how the Psalms—the Songs of Degrees, by way of example—were sung ; and if, telling the children the story and helping them with maps and pictures, they would teach them to sing ‘ as in the ancient days ’ !

But to return to this Christian hymn that comes to us from long ago. I recall one

memorable Sunday evening when its proper singing did high service for our Master. The London Choir of the Children's Home was in Leeds. It was Palm Sunday. The boy who should have taken the principal soprano solos had returned home stricken with the sickness which, some years later, carried him away to another and higher choir. We were all very sad. The people, too, were disappointed, for the boy had a wonderful gift. Everybody loved him, and of late the hand of the Master, more often than not, had rested upon him, so that he sang not only the music, but the soul of the words. A girl came to fill Llewellyn's place. The Sunday-night service was held in Brunswick Chapel. Mr. F. A. Mann—now also at rest—played the organ, as did Samuel, son of Charles Wesley, at the opening of the great instrument. The congregation was immense. Bonner Road girls and boys filled the choir seats. In the midst of the service the preacher announced this ancient hymn, explaining how its writer intended it to be sung, and emphasizing the

fact that the bride, the Church, speaking for her Lord, answered the question of each verse. From one of the carved mahogany choir seats flanking the organ rose a girl-voice singing the question—

Art thou weary, art thou languid,  
Art thou sore distrest?

And then, from the vast congregation, in one mighty volume of song, came the answer—

Come to me, saith One, and coming,  
Be at rest.

Long before we reached the last verse, in which the whole Church triumphant joins the song, the congregation was in tears, and many a one that night must have risen to follow Jesus.

There are, let me again say, two leading thoughts in the hymn—‘Come’ and ‘Follow.’

Come to Me, saith One.  
If I find Him, if I follow.

Are not these two words great, especially for those who, in the early morning of life,



are opening the books and beginning to learn? Last week most of the schools were refilled with boys and girls all reminiscent of the fun and joy of the Christmas holidays. In many schools, so I am told, the Scripture study for examination this term is St. Matthew's Gospel. Early in that wonderful story the children, if they are properly taught, will hear the still small voice of their Lord—'Come,' 'Follow Me.' May I say one word to teachers, whether mothers helping the bairns with home lessons, or ministers holding Bible-classes in schools, or masters or mistresses—let me speak to you one earnest word of entreaty: Do not let this first message of the Master come to the ears of the children's souls harshly, roughly, or in a dull, dry monotony of mere lesson-learning. Let it come to them as it came to Peter and John, as it came to Matthew, with the melody of Galilean waters rippling on the shore, with the wind sighing among the reeds. Let the voice that speaks the words be His voice: royal! yes, but also infinitely tender and winsome. Think,

my friend, before you begin those lessons of yours, how many children have been forced into hatred of the Bible, and of religion, by the heedless, not to say vicious, fashion in which the Bible has been taught. To this day I instinctively shrink from Catechisms. Why? Because when I was a very small boy a grammar-school master was stupid enough to teach me my duty to God and my neighbour at the point of a cane. The sting of it abides. He meant well, doubtless, but did ill, for he inflicted a life-long injury on one small child. Our Lord reserved His severest words of anger for sham religion, and for those who wrong children. Think of it! 'It were better for him that a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea.'

If we try to teach the Bible, whether in church or school or home, is it not well to set upon the work with this fact shining before us—that the Bible is the most picturesque, songful, storyful Book in the world? You must sing its truth. You



cannot help wondering, imagining, dreaming as you read. I ask you now, in all seriousness, Is it not a sin so to teach the Bible as to make it a wearisome task-book to children? I know little Jewish boys and girls whose great punishment it is to be kept away from school when the Bible is being taught and Christian hymns are sung.

How much that is brave and mysterious and pleasant and solemn is suggested by this word 'following'! Soldiers follow their leader through fire and flood and blood, daring everything that he dares, and the more they love and honour him the more perfectly they trust him. So may we follow Christ.

Birds through countless millenniums have followed the same path through the upper air, crossing sea and land, that they may find in southern climes the summer warmth and food which the winter-stricken north denies them. So may we follow the Light, and of us it shall be true, 'Their sun shall no more go down, neither shall the moon

withdraw herself! and the days of their mourning shall be ended.'

On Saturday night the Boy and I heard a lecture on 'Protection by Mimicry.' The charm of the lecture was in its illustrations. All the odd things described by Drummond in *Tropical Africa* we saw. Some were the queerest imitations imaginable. There were sticks, and thorns, and splotches of lime, and lichen-like insects, and butterflies with folded wings—mid-ribbed, veined, coloured, shaped, stalked, even spotted with mildew — and people vowed and declared they were not butterflies at all, but dead brown leaves. One butterfly, differing utterly in size, shape, and colour-marks from her liege love-lord, had exactly imitated the form and adornments of another insect which, to the palate of every questing bird, is a nauseous morsel. It was all mystery, and the only conceivable explanation lay in that same word 'following.' Through how many millenniums we know not, the creatures have followed the great law within—the law of self-preservation, and so, little by little, they have been

changed into images of something else. Are there not similar laws in the spiritual world, which we men and women, boys and girls, may follow? How great and wonderful it is to have within us that which Paul the apostle calls 'the law of the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ'!

A week ago a long procession, mostly of sailors and marines, followed a gun-carriage as it slowly wound through country lanes, four miles, to a quiet churchyard. On the gun-carriage rested a coffin which was wrapped in a Union Jack, borrowed from the majestic ironclad that led the fleet in the Solent when Queen Victoria passed from her island home through lines of battle-ships, and the thundering farewells of all nations, and the solemn strains of Chopin's funeral march, and flames of red light from the setting February sun, and her people's tears. And on the Union Jack lay a worn cocked-hat, with sword and epaulettes and insignia of rank and honour—and a cross woven of white orchids, and lilac, and lilies of the valley, and fern. Later, a wreath was

added, sent by an Emperor, and sailor-men carried memorial flowers, and the arms of Mother Earth, opened in the village churchyard to take the old sailor-dust, were lined with flowers; but, according to the story told by one who was present, at first only the one cross of white flowers rested on the coffin. To the cross was fastened a note written by the Queen's hand—'In loving memory of my beloved "Little Admiral," the best and bravest of men, from Alexandra. "Rest in Peace."' And whilst the procession was passing through the country lanes, in the Chapel Royal the King and Queen, and many of the noblest and fairest in the land, silently heard the great words—'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' And they sang together—Mr. W. G. Alcock playing his own tune—the hymn we know so well :

Safe home, safe home in port !

Also that other hymn for which Sir Frederick Bridge wrote the music :

Sunset and evening star.

He was an old man—born in the early years of the last century—and was known as ‘the Father of the Fleet.’ In the days of his strength every sailor counted it joy and honour to serve under ‘Harry Keppel.’ At home, and in circles where princes and princesses forget their royalty in homely friendship, he was ‘dear Uncle Harry.’ And when the end came, the greatest in the land and the lowliest followed him to his last resting-place. At such times we think of careers, rewards, honours, brilliant deeds winning brilliant distinctions. And then something happens that brings home to our plain English sense of the fitness of things the fact that the simplest is the best—the wreath of bay leaves without gold or jewel. Can we imagine anything better among earthly honours than the white cross of flowers with its simple words, ‘My beloved “Little Admiral”’?

These flowers fade, and the echoes of song and salute die away among the hills. But there is something in which we all may share that will never fade, never be hushed

into silence. One day the great white throne will be set. Think of it! Not black. That would be terrible. But a white throne. And the books will be opened, and white-robed angels will hear the crowned Lord say to those who have followed Him—

Come, ye blessed children of My Father!



## DOORWAYS

OVER the dinner-table in a City restaurant a friend told me tales about his children.

You hear a tune. It may not be a very good tune, but some mystic quality therein sets chords in your soul vibrating, and the chords will not be silent until the tune has been played over again, and sung to its proper time, in the congregation or at the Sunday fireside. 'Do play "Sound the battle-cry,"' said Theodora last Sunday evening. 'It is singing in my head all the time, and I cannot get rid of it.' A few weeks ago I heard a great musician say precisely the same thing. Coleridge made effective use of a similar mental experience in his 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner.'

Day by day since the City dinner-hour one of my friend's stories has been singing



its quiet tune in my brain, and I cannot get rid of it except by telling it to somebody else.

Of what persuasion, male or female, the wee bairn is, I do not know. But one day its soul was disburdened of the thoughts sighing for utterance in the following strange version of a well-known hymn :—

There is a happy lamb,  
Far, far away,  
Where saints in doorways stand—

The rest of the verse I never heard for laughing and crying and wondering.

Now, I strongly object to parodies of sacred things, whether texts of Holy Scripture or verses of scarcely less holy hymns. This bairn's father and mother, I am sure, feel just as strongly on such matters as any of us. But this was no frolicsome parodying of words consecrated by long use and tender memories. On the contrary, it was a most serious interpretation of something the child had heard and thought about—a various reading of beautiful old words written on the unsoiled tablet of a child's mind.

Little Huldah—she must be a prophetess, and I must give her a name—has begun to see visions and dream dreams. What has she seen? What words has the angel, who sees the face of the child's Father in heaven, whispered in the ear of her soul? Has she seen the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and the 'many mansions' on the golden street of the City, where the children play, and the Holy Ones standing in the doorways—doors that are never shut by day, for there is no night there? Has little Huldah seen the Holy Ones in their white array, and heard them singing their welcome to the pilgrims who are weary of the night?

I do not despair of discovering some great thinker about the unseen, who will agree with us that really little Huldah's version is just as true as the original, and in some ways a better reading.

There is a happy Lamb,  
Far, far away.

Has He not entered into His joy? Does He not now see of the travail of His soul?

Why, for us, ever since John wrote the Revelation, has all heaven been full of joyful music? Is not the Lamb that was slain the Lamb that liveth again, and reigneth in boundless power to save? Is He not the Light of the City, its Life, the Spring of all its joy? Child-like souls, like the saintly Rutherford, understand these things. It is not of heaven as a place they think, so much as of Him who fills all heaven with the joy of His presence. The 'happy land, far, far away' is real, but how much more real the 'happy Lamb,' who, in one sense, is so far away, but in another sense is very near; just as heaven is near, lying about the infancy of new-born souls, to whom Jesus is all and in all.

Where saints in doorways stand.

We may be quite sure, for the teaching of the New Testament is clear, though not frequently expressed, that not only is the Lamb waiting to receive to the place He has prepared for them those who have washed away their sins in His most precious

blood, but the saints also are waiting. They without us will not be made perfect. We are encouraged to think of life far, far away in song and picture, in dream and vision, as well as in terms of sober theological expression. 'Glory' is vague. It conveys to the mind of a little child nothing definite unless it be a haze of brilliantly coloured light, an Aurora Borealis, a summer evening sunset over a silver sea. But a doorway is so real. Is it not a refuge from the pelting snowstorm and the bitter wind, from the darkness of the night, from the perils of street or moor? Is it not an entrance into the house that may be a castle, or a mansion set in gardens, or a cottage home where the fire burns brightly on the swept hearth, and mother sits rocking the baby, and father rests after the toils of the day, and children play with whispered words? How is it possible for any child who has heard her father or mother read at morning prayer the beautiful words, 'In My Father's house are many mansions,' not to picture the scene? She constructs a heaven in her

imagination, and is encouraged to do so. There is no possibility of conveying to her mind at present just ideas of the unseen world, except by help of imaginary scenes and sounds. It is all a fairy story; and yet, like the best fairy stories, it is full to overflowing with truth and reality. You cannot tell by any process of abstract reasoning how much of the outer shell of the story is real to the child; nor can you tell how far she perceives the inner life, and loses the shell in the life. Every now and then a burst of childish confidence makes thoughtful mothers feel that, somehow, the children understand the inner spiritual reality, and that they actually care for it far more than they care for the outer framework constructed by a vivid imagination. 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth'—of the unseen and of the seen—'because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.'

Two men talked in the train. Asked why he had chosen a certain London suburb

as his future residence, one replied : 'It's the people. The place is nothing, but hosts of friends live there.' Nothing that you read about heaven makes you care greatly to go there. The charm is the company, not the place. 'That where I am, there ye may be also.' Hymns of long ago that gave luscious descriptions of heaven do not appeal to you except by their quaintness. But to sing 'What are these arrayed in white, Brighter than the noon-day sun,' or 'There all the ship's company meet, Who sailed with our Saviour beneath,'

And if our fellowship below  
In Jesus be so sweet,  
What heights of rapture shall we know  
When round His throne we meet—

these hymns of our own people stir one's pulses, as they say 'Home, sweet home' does in distant lands. Why do English people like Tennyson's hymn, 'Sunset and evening star'? Some say there is nothing in it except a jingle of words. I differ. It contains one phrase which alone accounts for its popularity :—'I hope to see my Pilot



face to face, When I have crossed the bar.'

Little Huldah's vision of heaven, with 'A happy Lamb, far, far away,' and saints in doorways standing, 'bright, bright as day,' is not far removed from Charles Wesley's vision, or from St. John's.

On a dark, draughty railway platform, I ran against a friend who spends all the time he can spare from business among the poor, the lonely, the tempted. Presently the train whirled us into sulphurous tunnels. But the carriage was lit by something better than electric lamps. I looked into my friend's face, and heard, above the tunnel-roar, the sweet voice of my little prophetess singing—'Bright, bright as day.'

Said he, 'I sometimes feel a bit down-hearted, but I never let them see it. No, it would not do. You must face them with a smiling face.' They do come to the open doorway in which he stands—the most lost of them, sodden old men, and dreary women, and crowds of children whose only playground is the muddy street. And many a



little corner in that heaven-in-hell has its miniature mansions, and in their way they, too, are 'halls of Zion'

All jubilant with song ;  
And bright with many an angel—

and the next line is not all untrue—

And all the martyr throng ;

but the next is absolutely true, as Huldah would tell you if, with her seeing eyes, she visited those tiny halls of Zion—

The Prince is ever in them ;  
The daylight is serene.

These little mansions in the Father's house on earth, which the Lamb always prepares when the people adore Him, have much in common with the heavenly places of the child's song. It is true of them also—

And saints in doorways stand  
Bright, bright as day.

Churches, class-meetings, Sunday schools, have their doorways. Suppose the 'saints' who stand in the doorways have scowling faces, will even the weariest pilgrims care to come in ?

Some who call themselves 'Followers of the Lamb' shut to the door, and bolt it, and look out through prison-barred openings, their faces black as night. Is it wonderful that their houses are left unto them desolate? Would little Huldah come in, or the Prodigal Son, or broken-hearted Peter, or the woman that was a sinner?

Ah! Huldah, my dear, perhaps just now you have nothing better than a doll's house. Well, keep it clean and cosy. Set the door wide open. If anybody wishes to give you a doll, ask them to buy a little one, with a smiling face and shining hair. Call her Mercy, and let her stand in the doorway. And, Huldah dear, sing! 'Sing unto the Lord a new song.' And pass what I am saying on to father and mother, and all the ministers in your circuit. And, especially just now, be sure you pass it on, or beg father to pass it on, to all the saints who are going to stand in the doorway of the Missionary Church. It is no manner of use for any class-leader to talk to his members about Foreign Missions, or for any canvasser to

knock at anybody's door, unless he has been far, far away, up into the mountain of God, and has there seen the King in His beauty, and has caught the radiance of His hope and joy and love.

There is nothing in all its work that Methodism more needs to-day than this wisdom that came to my friend's little child—who knows? as a message, it may be, for you and me—

And saints in doorways stand  
Bright, bright as day.

## SAP

**T**HERE is a touch of spring in the air. For the first time these many weeks the sun is shining. A week ago snow lay on the garden, and sleet drove through the black fruit trees. This morning there are six primrose blooms in the south border, and crocus buds are showing above the sodden earth. The other day I met a little maid. From her pocket she produced three snowdrops, the spoils of a sheltered garden facing the sea. Yes, the spring is coming, and after spring, summer.

We are saved by hope. Through dreary days of winter, when the wind wails requiems for withered leaves, and cheerful flowers with bees for lovers are no more, Hope shines and sings, and we know that for every dead leaf there will one day be two living leaves, and that the flowers through death will bring forth life, and life more abundant.

Out of the noisy City I turned, this afternoon, into an alley that runs by the side of an ancient graveyard in which are trees, and ivied walls, and a grey old church tower that stands alone. Up in one of the leafless trees perched a great chorus of sparrows in full song. They were singing their evening hymn before the hush of night fell. The song filled all the enclosure with a very madness of joy and love. As I passed out of the alley where the city sparrows have 'found a house,' my eye caught the name, in white enamel, 'Star Alley.' Why did men so call it? Was the old church tower used as an observatory, from which, long ago, they watched the stars? Or did white starwort grow in profusion over the graves of the dead? Anyhow, the sparrow-chorus and the star-name helped that touch of spring in the air that sets everybody to-day cheerfully shaking hands.

At the turn of the year, when the sap begins to rise, how responsive are all living things! Even the old renew their youth, desiring to sing a new song unto the Lord,

and everything that hath life, birds and trees and bees, and creatures you cannot see except with a glass, lift up their hearts and want to begin over again the cycle of their lives.

I paid a visit just now to the library, searching for the paper on which these lines are written. Swathed in borrowed robes stood a girl's cycle, being there for safety and dryness. It also has upon it the touch of spring. The owner used the implements of girlish toil to such purpose—and, I am bound to acknowledge, her tongue also—that the old winter-rusted, mud-splashed cycle returned from the cycle-mender's restored and resplendent. It awaits the spring mornings and the long summer evenings.

On the table by my side lies a rosy-lipped doll, with tiny leather boots, and red stockings, and a white lace frock, and sky-blue mantilla, and sash and hood. To-morrow another Ruth, who also belongs to the harvest field and to the 'everlasting wings,' will come to nurse the doll, and will lay her in the blue-lined cot, with real sheets and



blankets and pillows. Is not this also the touch of spring?

The coming of a little child into a house, whether on a visit or for ay, what an event it is! What a new beginning for everybody! One fact always impresses. The more Christian the atmosphere into which a little child comes, the more potent its influence. The book that Isaiah wrote is more quoted than any other book of the Bible, except the Psalms and the Gospels. One of the most quoted sentences in Isaiah is the one which describes a little child as leading. But it is not the wild creatures in their wildness that follow. They have all fallen—wild and tame together—under the spells of righteousness and meekness; and the wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; ‘and a little child shall lead them.’ This touch of spring, with its freshness, and delicate beauty, and subtle power over man and beast, over trade and commerce, over things good and noxious, great and small, how quickly it would vanish



before blustering winds and sleet showers !  
How easily are the songs of childhood  
hushed, and its joys withered, and its  
influence for good in our homes perished !

On Saturday afternoon I went to the children's Bible festival in the Albert Hall. It was wonderful to see that vast hall crowded with children and their parents, and to hear them sing 'Tell me the old, old story.' One of the Royal Princesses—a lady whose days are spent in good works—cut the great Bible Society birthday cake. The Lord Mayor and a brave show of City grandeur graced the platform. It was indeed a meeting that will long be remembered. But the most impressive sight of all was not the splendour of London City, or the white-robed choir, or even the kindly face of the good Princess ; but a little blind boy. Whilst we sang the first hymn the child came forward with his Blind Bible. He laid it on the table near the Marquis-President, found the place, and, as soon as the hymn ceased, began to read. One of his readings was this : 'And the blind and

the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased, and they said unto Him, Hearest Thou what these say? And Jesus said unto them, Yea, have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?'

As the child-voice reading these words stole penetratingly through the vast hall-spaces, there came also the mystic breath of the good south wind that brings the touch of spring, and makes the sap rise, and drives away winterly moroseness and fretfulness, and draws men together in brotherhood, because it brings them nearer to the Father of all. The voice of the blind boy recalls what was happening a hundred years ago here in England, when, under the spells of a new springtide, the sweet flowers of God's garden bloomed afresh, and ferocious animosities among His children were so far allayed that Isaiah's picture once more came

true. Christian men were too busy with evangelisms and philanthropies, and the gathering of the blind and lame to Jesus in the temple, to bite and devour any more, and therefore it was that, as Mr. Paton said, 'a little child led them.'

This present time may seem to many a time of fierceness. The blast of winter has withered. The Beautiful Gate of the Temple is crowded with frowning faces. The still small voice is lost in the roar of whirlwinds and the crash of earthquakes. The Lord within sorrowfully waits until once more the blind and lame come to Him. Outside, among Christian Churches the wind blusters, the sleet drives. But into the midst of it has come the touch of spring, the dawn of a new day, the peace of God, the leading, in the greatest of all the religious societies, of a little child, 'and the suckling plays at the hole of the asp, and the weaned child lays its hand on the basilisk's den.'

Will ye interpret, O my masters ?

## A 'PINNY'

**T**HE child sat in her high chair at the breakfast-table. The most conspicuous portion of her morning toilet, and to my thinking the prettiest, was a blue cotton pinny striped with white.

'That's Yorkshire,' I remarked. I might have added 'West Riding.'

'Yes,' retorted her mother, 'and thereby hangs a tale.'

'Tell it!' And everybody listened, for in our house everybody loves a tale, down to the maid who ought to have been 'in the garden hanging out the clothes.'

The story proved to be neither a tragedy nor a comedy, but a simple incident in humble life.

'One of our mothers in the Mission wanted to give Baby Ruth a present. She was poor, and had nothing to give, as she thought,

worthy of the child's acceptance. So she went out and did a day's work, and with her wage bought this pinny.' And as the tale was told, the pinny became 'all-glorious,' like the clothing of a queen's daughter.

I sometimes think there are no children around whom more love has gathered than the children of ministers, and most of all the children of Methodist ministers, whose lot is cast among the poor. If nurseries could be ransacked, how many pathetic little tokens of a great love would be discovered! 'The Mission baby!' How often in recent years have I heard the words, and seen hard hands stretched out to touch the gift sent by the good God into the minister's busy home, and into the fellowship of his service for the lost and the neediest! I think of country circuits, where everybody knows everybody, and nothing that happens in any house can be hid. If the minister, or, worse still, the minister's wife, should live aloof in lonely pride, and the children should be jealously guarded from contact with the sympathetic humanities of lowly family circles,

what becomes of the sermons preached from pulpits, and words of wisdom spoken when 'tickets' are given? They wander echo-like in the dreary interspaces of half-empty pews and forms, finding no lodgement in human hearts. One would cherish the belief that such misfits are rare. Indeed, as I write these words, no instance of so melancholy and disastrous a failure in a Methodist preacher's family life comes to my remembrance out of recent experience. For reasons not difficult to understand, Methodism is becoming not less, but more and more homely. No fuss is made about it. No Synod, as yet, has invented a schedule in which to tabulate the assets and results of Methodist friendliness—the number of people in town and village societies who know almost as much about 'our minister' as his own mother, who are fairly well posted in the domestic joys and sorrows of the good man's wife, and could pass a creditable examination in the names and ages, the ailments and rogueries, of their children. The last sentence describes



the first line only in the hypothetical schedule. The remaining lines would be—barring their straightness—like the outer and indefinitely extending rings in a deep, still pool when a stone is thrown into the water. Can any one estimate with approximate accuracy how far-reaching is the influence of a home where the Master is a frequent visitor, and the door is always 'on the sneck,' and the windows are not frosted, and there is always a cup and saucer for one more, and, though there may be many sorrows, there are no secrets? Can any man living count or measure the influences of such a home?

Last Sunday I worshipped in a kind of town-village congregation. When the Benediction had closed the service, the people fell into little groups, whispering one to another in friendly greeting. The minister's wife had with her a little boy, who became the centre of one such group. The preacher shook hands with him. His face became radiant with gladness as there fell to his lot words of kindness from neighbourly people.



Outside rose the roofed shell of a stately church, into which, presently, the hall-congregation will migrate. Until quite lately there was nothing but a grass field—no hall, no congregation, no Sunday school, no Wesley Guild, no likelihood of a church, stately or otherwise. I have wondered since Sunday morning whether these things ever would have been but for the subtle and all but omnipotent compulsions of Methodist friendliness. Some churches are built up on the immeasurable popularity and mighty preaching of one man. Others never, or only fitfully, share in helpfulness of this kind. Nevertheless, they rise, and grow, and gather golden sheaves, and in quiet ways distil aromatic fragrances, and become nurseries of influence that never dies. Such churches, be they big or little, are like rivers of God that never run dry, and are always kind to men and birds and fish. Like Tennyson's brook, they sing—

Men may come, and men may go,  
But I go on for ever.

The church of the little boy with a

laughing face and wondering eyes had its remote beginning in a great burst of tenderness and friendship. I heard the man who built the hall, and who is doing not a little towards the building of the stately church, say that years ago, in the black days of the Lancashire Cotton Famine, he read stories of the sorrow and suffering, and, having seven and sixpence in his pocket—all that he had—he gave it. Truly there are memories in Methodist families more precious than rubies.

A baby's pinny! You consider this, madam, if, indeed, you have had the patience to read thus far—a babyish subject. I heartily agree with your criticism. But may I deprecate your scorn? May I ask you to consider again? Time was, madam, when you, too, were as infantile as little Ruth, and wore pinnies, and played with dolls, and, because of your baby ways, filled all the house with new interest, kindling afresh fires of love and joy and concern. Is not a baby the springhead of a hundred little loves and joys, and hopes and fears? Are these

of no account in older human lives? Do they contribute nothing towards the making or re-making of grown-up lives? And therefore to the making or re-making of Churches, States, schools of science or philosophy? Read books of biography—Arnold of Rugby, Charles Kingsley, Lewis Carroll, Queen Victoria, or, the last and greatest of all, Morley's *Life of Gladstone*. And when you have exercised your thinking faculties by the space of one year in the study of these books, or the like, ask yourself what these personages would have been, and what England and all the British Empire would have been, if all the influences that belonged strictly to little children had not played upon the harpsichord strings of those great lives during their most formative years.

Why did Jesus so earnestly say, 'Suffer the little children to come unto Me'? Luke—doctor, historian, man of accurate words and vivid picturing—uses a word that transforms these particular children into babies: 'And they brought unto Him also

their babies'—too young to be taught—'that He should touch them.' But this is the special question I desire to ask. Was it for their sake only that He said, 'Suffer them to come'? Or for their sake, for His own, and for the sake of the disciples themselves? If the babes needed Him, did not He need them? And did not His disciples need them? I overleap the centuries. There rises before me the picture of a Methodist mission in a crowded city. The responsibility falls upon a young minister. In the midst of the wildest rush of work and anxiety that, in these modern days, ever fell upon a Methodist preacher, God sends into his little home a baby boy, and then another, and another, and yet another. And, as the years pass, I see the little children creeping, all unconsciously, into multitudinous lives. There is no one, no matter how poor, or sorrowful, or in need of the Master's miracle-working, who does not know something about 'our minister's boys.' Even the angels in heaven, do they fully understand how much, for the sake of the man and his wife and

their comrades in service, and for the sake of all the work that had to be done from day to day, the Master Himself needed those little children ?

I read over again what has been written on the first sheet of paper lying on my blotting-pad. It is, I fear, an utterly inadequate representation of the child's 'pinny.' Did you ever know a man who had a gift for seeing, let alone describing, the details of the attire of bride, mother, or baby ? This pinny, in particular, is not to be thought of as sixpennyworth of blue striped calico shaped and stitched together, but, as in truth it is, a beautiful and relatively costly outer garment. At this point you, madam, are sorely tempted to ask a question that I beg to remind you is ancient—'Wherefore this waste ?' Would not the price of the 'pinny' have been better spent on something less decorative and more useful ? Do you remember the answer our Lord made to that question, when all the room was filled with the fragrance of the spikenard, and the

fragments of the precious alabaster box lay about His feet? Will you take all the poetry, all the extravagance of heavenly-mindedness and self-sacrifice out of the lives of the poor? Will you sternly forbid them ever to indulge in any mad profusion of love for Christ, and Christ's disciples, and Christ's work—in a prodigality that the world will stigmatize as reckless? Some of us give of our abundance, perhaps give largely, yet within a few days we are not conscious of any pinch of poverty as the result of our giving. But even now, in these more matter-of-fact times, there are men and women who give their all, and give it not always in forms more utilitarian than the gift of the woman, who chose the better part, the part that her Lord would not allow Judas or anybody else to take away from her.



## PALS

**Y**OU do not like this title? You call it slang.

Should the title seriously disturb your equanimity, cross it out, and substitute 'Chums,' or 'Mates.' Either will serve almost, though not quite, equally well. Only, in all honesty, I am bound to warn you that the preferred titles also are slang, as, indeed, are not a few of the most picturesque words of our English tongue. If words have come to us from the Latins or the Greeks, we count them in the peerage of language. Norman-French also is in honour, and, of late years, Saxon, Celtic, Sanscrit. Is Gipsy, or Romany, less ancient, or, for the matter of that, less honourable than some of these? Possibly not. At all events, 'Pal' is pure Gipsy. Perhaps, if you made a careful philological and historical



study of this word, that has come to us fresh from the gipsy tents, you would find for it astonishing affinities and heraldic quarterings rivalling the shields of German princelings. But that is not our business just now.

On my way to the new railway station early one Saturday morning, I bestowed a halfpenny on an intercepting newsboy, receiving in exchange one of the news rivals that are striving to do for half the price what used to cost a penny. After reading the tidings of the day, I alighted on one of those tit-bits of natural history with which most of the popular newspapers spice their columns.

A large jelly-fish, examined, will be found to contain a number of small white shrimps with brilliant green eyes. They feed on the little living creatures captured by the stinging tentacles of the jelly-fish, yet they themselves are not stung. It is said that this particular shrimp is never found except in this strange partnership. The two creatures are chums, mates — wandering, tent-dwelling

gipsy pals. Living together, they both make provision for the next season, and then, as the chills of autumn fall upon the sea, they both die. If you have eyes to see, and any soul of poetry, you will not object to the quotation of a text over their evanishment. 'Lovely and pleasant in their lives, in death they were not divided.'

Once I saw a similar palship. It was on a hot summer's day, in the mouth of one of the numberless caves that pierce the rocky base of Sark. A fisherman, his boat, a couple of zinc pails, a basket of wide-mouthed bottles, a dredge, a tow-net, a quiet sea, and a sunshine that pierced the crystal green water to deep places where long weed - fronds waved in the shore currents—such was the equipment for an excursion in search of anything curious, or terrible, or beautiful.

The first oddity on which we alighted was a jelly-fish. I can see it now, with its long fringe of tentacles, and its breast richly coloured and palpitating. As the shadow of the dipping-pail fell athwart the creature,

I saw with no little astonishment a shoal of tiny fishes flash like gleams of silver through the fringed tentacles into the safe shelter of the dome-like crystalline tent. When the bucket of clean sea-water, to which the Medusa was transferred, had stood undisturbed for a while, the fishes swam out into the open ; but when a hand, however gently, touched the surface of the water, the wee fishes fled in terror to their foster-mother, who sheltered them from danger—as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. It was a pretty picture, and worth a journey all the way to Sark to see. The fisherman assured me that the friendship between the two was quite common. They were pals.

Many similar and even stranger friendships may be seen.

A huge mussel lay among the 'rubbish' at the bottom of a fisherman's boat. I opened it with some difficulty. Inside the strong shells was the soft, creamy builder and owner thereof, fat and flourishing, enjoying the best of health. And nestling in the midst lay a jovial little crab. Lest you

should do yourself the injustice of wrongfully accusing me of truthless romance, I will give you the scientific name of this crab. Naturalists call it *Pinnotheres*. This is what they soberly and scientifically say about it:—

‘The pinnothere is a brigand who causes himself to be followed by the cavern which he inhabits, and which opens only at a well-known watchword. The association redounds to the advantage of both; the remains of food which the pinnothere abandons are seized upon by the mollusc.’ The crab is well furnished with fishing tackle and hunting weapons. His host provides him with a travelling caravan, ambush, robber’s cave, from which he can rush out on his unsuspecting prey, and to which he can return in safety. Then comes the rent-audit, which, as on land and in higher spheres of life, is a dinner shared by landlord and tenant. They are not enemies, but friends—gipsy pals, or, to use the term accepted by naturalists, ‘messmates.’ Do you crave a stately Latin title? Then here it is—

‘Commensalists.’ Any boy with a dictionary will tell you its meaning.

We think of Nature as cruel—red in tooth and claw, living by rapine, waging ruthless war. But not always is Nature thus. Nor is the other side so scantily illustrated as some would imagine. On land, among birds and beasts and insects, there are friendships quite idyllic, and not always to be accounted for by self-seeking or even mutual advantage. But you must search the waters—which still, as at the beginning, bring forth so abundantly—for the most striking examples of palship.

The fisherman out of whose boat I took the mussel that housed the crab helped me the same day to find a bewildering assortment of little sea-beasts dwelling together in joyful and helpful friendship. Many of them loved a roving life, and were dependent on the kindly offices of neighbours for power to gratify their itinerant instincts. Oddly enough, those neighbours were not always mild-mannered vegetarians, or Quaker-like people, opposed on principle to fighting

and to blood-curdling methods of house-keeping. Often they were the most rampant, riotous, murdering, voracious creatures anywhere in the shallow seas to be found. But even they seemed to have a better side.

You may say that nowhere in the great water-world can life be discovered that gives 'something for nothing'; that always, if you could get behind the scenery of these queer friendships, there would be discovered some law of mutual gain or comfort governing the friendly actions or tolerances not only of crabs and mussels, but also of sea-worms and barnacles and zoophytes. It may be so, but I am bound in simple justice to say that sometimes it is very difficult to discover the law. In some instances, one is driven back upon that love of beauty, or, if you prefer it, of coloured and graceful finery which seems to be inseparable from Nature, prevailing in unlikely places and producing astonishing effects. One of the first things I picked out of the fisherman's trawl-net, when it came up from the sea-floor



under the shadow of great chalk rocks, was a crab with fin-like claws. It was about the size of a five-shilling piece. Its eye-stalks glittered like jewels. Its back was like a miniature Devonshire cottage garden. Every atom of space was covered with weeds and zoophytes, brilliantly coloured and teeming with life. As I write these words of poor description there comes back a picture which the first sight of this wandering crab-garden suggested. It was the picture of a London costermonger's hand-barrow in the early morning of a summer's day—a barrow fresh from Covent Garden. And I could hear the not unmusical cry of the coster—'All a-growing and a-blowing!'

A Cockney coster is a shrewd man of business. Whatever his special line, he always has an eye to the main chance. Yet he, not less, but perhaps on the whole rather more, than his millionaire brother who deals in diamonds and gilt-edged stock, has a soul sensitive to beauty, and by no means strange to the virtue and poetry of palship.



If the Leysian powers appointed me dictator-in-chief over the arrangements connected with public worship in the great Leysian Hall which the Prince and Princess of Wales so cheerfully opened, I would go straight to the delightful buildings hard by, where the costers dwell, and I would ask the men and their wives to appoint a committee that week by week would make itself responsible for the floral adornment of the platform. They, probably, would appoint a sub-committee of flower-girls to assist in the business. If you want to know how the work would be done, make a tour of London streets, and examine the coster barrows with flowers, fruit, garden food, or, if you like, fish. They make pretty pictures, as my camera has discovered. And I am 'fond and foolish' enough to believe that it is not greed of gain, merely or chiefly, that accounts for the gifts of order, taste in colour, and sense of beauty that so largely prevails among the lowlier denizens of these deep places of London life.

Nor is the palship of coster life selfish.

That it is helpful, here as everywhere else in all worlds of creaturely life, no careful observer can fail to see. But mutual helpfulness does not destroy friendship, or even lessen the possibilities of unselfish self-sacrifice. It rather fosters an atmosphere in which the noblest friendships may thrive. Was Abraham less truly the friend of God because at the call of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, he promptly came up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty? You say such a question, on the face of it, is absurd. It was in a faithful discharge of duty to God and duty to his neighbour that Abraham graduated for the twin degrees—surely the highest honours ever conferred—‘F. F.’ and ‘F. G.’—Father of the Faithful and Friend of God. Is not this the noblest conceivable development of fellowship?

You say, Why mix up these high things with such low, common, not to say vulgar things as crabs, and jelly-fish, and gipsies, and costers, and—shall I go on climbing the ladder? For it is a ladder, from the

lowest up to the highest. Have you forgotten the lesson drilled into the soul of the greatest of all fishermen at the outset of his world-wide work? Have you never stood gazing into 'a certain vessel as if it were a great sheet let down by four corners, upon the earth : wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven'? Did Peter think of his old fishing-net and its lessons when the voice came to him again and again, 'What God hath cleansed, call not thou common'? I cling lovingly to the fact that the four-footed beasts and creeping things belong not only to the earth, but also to the heavens. They came to Peter from thence, and they went back again. There is a great cabinet, or museum, or zoological collection, or aquarium full of sea beasties, or something answering to these things somewhere up in God's great heavens, which Theodora, and all the rest of the boys, and girls, and men, and women who have learnt to love Nature and all the creatures of God will be able one day to study more perfectly than they have

ever been able to study them here on earth. Does not the last book in the Bible put its great seal upon the truth that the archetypal creatures are as truly before the Throne of God as are the four-and-twenty elders or the innumerable company of redeemed souls?

A friend of mine sallied forth one night to march through slum streets, that at the end of his journey he might proclaim the glad tidings to the poor and the lost and the lonely ones. As he slowly marched along the busy street he felt a little hand creeping into his hand, and presently, when he looked down, he saw a dirty but eager little face gazing up into his face.

‘Preacher?’

‘Yes; what is it?’

‘You and me is pals, isn’t we?’

And my friend gripped the little hand more firmly. The slum child had touched the deepest springs, the true philosophy of the boundless success of the greatest Mission to the lowest strata of human society known in these modern times.

## THE MOUND

ON chill autumnal mornings the levels are a white sea of mist, and the Mound, rising out of the mimic sea, is crowned with sunshine.

Who raised the Mound no man knows with any certainty. It may have been Nature, or Romans, or Ancient Britons, or races of a remoter age—races who, as we know from their monuments elsewhere, wrought mightily in stone and earth. Perhaps all played their part and shared the glory.

There are deep trenches, and the fading suspicion of a moat, and an old-world wind-mill, and the remains of ancient woods and gardens. One can easily imagine that, from age to age in earlier times, the Essex mountain was known and wholesomely feared as a strongly fortified post dominating all the plain down to the estuary of the Thames.

We climbed the Mound in the early morning, before the world in general had awoke, hoping to see those Military Manœuvres concerning which every one in Essex was talking. Boys and girls eagerly scanned the newspapers for information. Shopkeepers hoped that quite a burst of trade might come to enrich the dull times upon which they had fallen. Strains of martial music echoing at nightfall among the trees and cottages of our lane raised hopes doomed to ignominious ending in the peaceful town band. As we forced our way through blackberry bushes and scrambled up wet slopes in peril of involuntary tobogganing into a Roman trench, we cheered the ascent with visions of battalions and batteries ploughing their weary way through Chelmsford mud, and wondered whether we should see the clash of arms between Red and Blue, or hear the thunder of Sir John French's artillery. But the only manœuvres visible were our own exploits in negotiating perilous heights, and the deploying of a flock of black and brown pullets on the



ancient meadow where white mushrooms grow.

Presently a rumble in the distance revived our dying hopes. Out of the fog rolled an early morning train. We were surely about to witness the siege of our village station, the capture of the railway communications, the cutting of telegraph wires, the storming of the Mound by a mountain battery. But, alas! the train was empty, and as it wheeled and whistled its way through fields and hedgerows towards the great city, nothing more exciting was left than the village milk-cart and a farmer's wagon.

The Boy was crestfallen because the strategic manipulations of opposing forces, which he had laboriously elaborated from newspapers brought from town by indulgent friends, remained unfulfilled. He had hoped to lead his mother and sisters to selected places in country lanes from which, in perfect safety, over white gates or through hedge gaps, they might see the marching of khaki hosts, the planting of guns, and the charging of cavalry. Alas! his experience



of military manœuvres had, perforce, to be limited to the disinterment of more or less complete battalions in red lead from a huge playbox carefully stowed away under miscellaneous household chattels in the garden shed—the survivors of mythical campaigns in many lands. With these he instructed his little sisters in the mystery of militarism, and wiled away the wet hours of that woful day during which soldiers Red and Blue were tramping far away through the Essex lanes.

The military history of the Mound not proving satisfactory, and there being no record that Wesley ever preached there, we turned our attention to its natural history.

On a sunny morning we explored the Mound, and held communion with its earliest builder, who leaves her traces in hedgerows and pools and grassy slopes. The deepest trench on the windmill side has at its western end a long pool, mostly, at this time of the year, green with ivy-leaved duckweed—the beautiful *Lemna trisulca*, out of which spring tufts of reeds and rushes.

We had brought an extemporized net, with baskets for flowers and fruits, and bottles for the wee beasties we hoped to capture. When the first sweep of the net under the floating duckweed brought up a tiny newt with fringed gills and a flat tail that waved in terror, the Boy was greatly elated, and oracularly declared his determination to 'go in for this.' My experience of him is that he responds to every appeal of Nature, no matter from what height or depth or remote corner it may come. He has constructed an elaborate dwelling-place for snakes, removed beyond the reach of neighbours' cats, and equally beyond the reach of baby fingers that might investigate the glittering pets to the alarm of mothers and to the still greater alarm of the pets themselves. He will tramp lonely miles to the banks underneath the woods that crown Benfleet on the chance of finding snakes. The workmen in brick-fields hard by, if they chance to alight on an abnormally big adder or grass snake or slow-worm, religiously keep it for him. They are mainly responsible for introducing him to

the delights of hedge bottoms and quaint nesting-places for birds and reptiles. Hitherto we have made no reptilian discoveries on or under the Mound. But every time we visit the place I dread the appearance of an adder gliding through the undergrowth, knowing that if the Boy once sets eyes upon the creature there will be no peace until he has captured it, and when it is safely lodged in the new snake-house there will be no peace among the women-folk of the establishment until, like 'Joe,' it has passed to where, beyond the love of boys and the protests of mothers and maiden aunts, there is peace.

'Joe,' I may explain, was a visitor, quite harmless, and, from all accounts, singularly affectionate. He belonged to a lady who, having spent many years in India, had conceived an affection for snakes and beasts and birds of prey. Being compelled to leave home for awhile, and not daring to entrust her pet to non-enthusiasts, she lent him to the Boy, who watched over him day by day with the tenderest solicitude, a solicitude to which Joe responded, twining his glittering

coils around the long fingers of his friend, and courteously making the best he could of the unwonted food submitted for his sustenance. Negotiations were in progress for the supply, from Benfleet, of a wife to cheer Joe's solitude. I deeply regret to say that before the arrival of her ladyship, Joe despairingly laid down his coils and exchanged mortality—for what?

Ah! For what? Who will solve the problem? Our pets, the comrades of our loneliness, the creatures who have trusted us and shared our confidences, and fed from our hand; whom we have loved and invested with all manner of excellences and rogueries; whom we nursed in sickness and buried with bitter lamentations. What has become of them? Shall we ever see them again?

Irene, who is not at all military in her tastes, but peaceful, as befits her name, is also fond of living creatures. But she draws the line at snakes, doting, however, on frogs. She is sitting on one of the Mound's lower slopes, at a discreet distance from the Boy,

whose mind and hand are set on 'going in' for the exploration of this ancient pond. Adventurings into the unknown do not appeal to Irene, nor does she care to be entangled in snake coils, or rushed into war-like proceedings ancient or modern, real or make-believe.

One evening, when the dew was falling on the cropt grass, I found her a wee frog. She carried it home in a white handkerchief, and made for it a new home in a long narrow tin that once, I believe, was stored with Scotch shortbread. A sod procured from our new lawn was supposed to illusionize the creature as to its whereabouts, and a saucerful of water provided a pond. An old negative limited the flying leaps that Froggie naturally desired to take, and enabled his mistress to inspect his proceedings. A whole entomological collection, including, on the last fateful day, an earwig, found its way into the palace of tin and glass. But whether it was that the sun boiled the water, or the earwig proved indigestible, or a wasp joined the collection,

or loneliness produced a melancholy, I know not, but Irene's pet passed over to the majority, leaving his mistress inconsolable. In vain did I bring home a small toad and throw in the Mound newt. She refused to be comforted. Boys lose their first loves and love again. Not so girls, or not so readily.

Who stocked this long narrow pool with greenery and life? Who, from age to age, have fished in its waters? Did black-haired, Iberic boys and girls, scantily clad in sun-tanned skins, catch sticklebacks here? Did they weave belts and coronets of reeds, and with brown fingers deftly link daisy chains? Did they also gather blackberries and mushrooms on dewy autumnal mornings? Did they strip the blackthorns of their fishhooks, and in the bark of prehistoric trees find lines to which their mothers fastened the hooks? Think of the times that have gone over these slopes and yonder plain down to the Estuary, where the ships now go by, and where once coracles flitted hither and thither, and then Roman triremes brought



armed men, and later vast yellow-haired Norsemen came and went, and Saxon, Dane, and Norman followed, with Dutch dyke-builders in plenty? Have they not all, in the procession of the centuries, climbed these same slopes and gazed with hungry eyes on fertile woods and corn lands and green pastures?

And think of the birds from over-seas, on their flight inland, up the rich valley of the Thames, deploying on a vast scale over the rich lands, and alighting to drink and wash their feet and preen their tired wings on the margins of this same venerable pool! Did they not stock the water with seeds and spores and germs of microscopic life, just as their descendants of many generations are restocking it to-day—or would do so if we, with our guns and snares and remorseless warfare against Nature, would permit them?

What there is in this old pond doth not yet appear. We must go home with our water-bottles and delicate sprays of *trisolca*, and set up the microscope, which will make



it plain to children's eyes that God's infinitely little is as wonderful in its way as the story of His dealing with races and nations.

Irene tells me that she does not like history. Perhaps it is because history, like the Bible and natural history and sums, is not as well and truly taught as might be. Or is it that her heart has not yet become indurated to the tales of rapine and blood with which history, like this pond and even these fair woods and fields, is rife? But she likes geography, and she knows her Bible right well, so far as it has been taught her, and she loves flowers and sweets and all living things (except spiders and earwigs), so there is hope that some day she will be fired with a passion to learn all that can be learnt about the great past, and about the mighty races whom God trained at divers times and in divers ways for His own purposes.

And in that day Irene will learn, as the Boy is learning, that all things work together, and are of and for God—all national history and natural history, all Bible history and

day-by-day history of our seemingly commonplace lives. This Mound, the old pond, the blackberry bushes on which children tear their hands and pinnies, the races whose bones rest in cinerary urns beneath the Mound, the armed hosts who have fought and died century after century on the plains far as the eye can see, the battleships the thunder of whose guns, ten or twenty miles away, breaks the silence of our night, the rattle of the milk-cart down the lane, the slow rumble of the farmer's wagon, the snakes and birds of Benfleet, the frogs and newts and rotifers we carry home from the pond, together with the stars in their courses and the angel encamping round us by night, and leading us by unseen ministries of the day—they are all of One, and He is our Father—over all the ages, and over all living things, God blessed for evermore.

## LIONS

**A**T times friends ask me to suggest texts for sermons. Experience proves that compliance with such requests is rarely helpful. A text, to be of any real use to a sermon-maker, must be in tune with his mind. If a man asks me to advise him in his love affairs, I respectfully decline, knowing that the advice, no matter how perfect it may be in wisdom and disinterestedness, will prove a waste product. So also the texts you give will almost certainly return to you without sermons.

The finding of texts is like the finding of wells. Of what use, unless those to whom they are given have something to draw with? A text that sings or howls, whispers, or thunders to him who finds it, may have nothing to say to his friend, and in that case how can he make a sermon?

Rules for the making of sermons are worthless—worse than worthless—because they are apt to beguile those who study them into the belief that the process is like the building of a house, whereas it is the growing of a tree, or the dreaming of a vision, or the hearing of a great voice as of a trumpet.

But sometimes a friend unwittingly gives you a text—a text from which you cannot escape, that buzzes in the centre of your brain and plays on your heart-strings, making strange melody, and, if you give good heed, stranger harmony. Then you have to preach. The congregation may be one or one thousand, the pulpit of stone or wood, the day sacred or common; but preach you must, though it be only to your own soul.

Yesterday, over a teacup, not knowing what he did, a friend gave me a text. It was borne in upon me winged by a story surpassingly strange and curious. Should he write asserting that he did not give me a text at all, please do not believe what

he says. Here, at the head of this paper, is the text—‘Lions.’

You object to the brevity of the text? The difficulty is in discovering exactly where the text in its fullest form begins and where it ends. But that I may not be chargeable with unreasoning perversity I will make a beginning. Let it be thus—

The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them  
that fear Him.

And delivereth them.

O taste and see that the Lord is good :

Blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.

O fear the Lord, ye His saints :

For there is no want to them that fear Him.

And now, having read and, to some extent, pondered the beginning, the Alpha, let us read the end, the Omega—

The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger :

But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good  
thing.

The text has comforted you in many times of straitness and sorrow. May it again speak comfortably to you in regard to those personal tribulations which are usually and quite justifiably associated with

it. But, like many other texts, its meaning is not exhausted by one interpretation. True in personal or family experience, it is true also in its relation to public interests. It preaches to communities—to nations, and especially to Churches.

Many and grievous are the anxieties of Christian Churches as they essay to do their Master's work. It is, alas! but too true that over large portions of the field into which He sends us men are 'plowing iniquity' and 'sowing wickedness.' Do we not hear the roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the grinding of the teeth of young lions? Churches 'lack and suffer hunger.' How often do the tasks set seem to be impossible! How many and threatening are the troubles that infest the paths of duty as we set foot within them! Surely at this time, if ever, the Churches of God in this and other lands need the inspiration of hope and strengthening with might.

Last Sunday was Holbeck Feast. Thousands were gathered on the Moor. The



description of the scene reminded us of Bunyan's picture of Vanity Fair. Are not the multitudes seen at a West Riding Feast or at any race-meeting precisely the gatherings of the people that Wesley bravely faced times without number? Here are the men and women who need us most, who utterly and obstinately refuse to sit in church pews, who, if we really believe our Bibles, are in danger of outer darkness. Has Methodism—Yorkshire Methodism, wealthy, cultured, well-clad and fed and housed—has Methodism no message for such a crowd? Has the God of our forefathers no messengers who will go with His Evangel to the people? From the old chapel that still bears Wesley's name they went last Sunday. The minister, espying the steps of a huge caravan, interviewed the proprietor, spake kindly to the man, hired the use and enjoyment—to quote the Deed Poll—of his uplifted steps. Then rose the voice of the old Methodist singing. It drew the people. But within the caravan were lions. They too lifted up their voices. When the first speaker opened his parable

the lions roared. He thought to pacify them by change of subject. But really, from all accounts, the lions helped rather than hindered. For the more they roared the more eagerly the people drew near, until at last there was a congregation of two thousand souls listening to the message of God's mercy and the deep roar of God's lions. And the people knew how to sing the hymns.

So once more it became true, that the angel of the Lord encamped round about them that feared Him.

## ‘AS A CHILD’

THEY sat in a sympathetic and not undignified row at the foot of the Child's bed, she regarding them with eyes of content and gratitude.

Had I marched them to their box in the nursery her wrath, now slumbering as in a toy-volcano, would have broken forth. She likes to see her dolls, Vicky always in the place of honour, sitting on the eiderdown quilt and gazing with wide-open eyes at their sick baby-mother.

Thinking to pleasure the little lady, I gently lifted Vicky, with whom I have long lived on terms of friendship, and re-seated her on the white pillow, close to the white baby face. But Marjorie insisted on the original position. I tried a similar experiment with Lady Maria, and then with Lady Betsey and the Lady Noname, but the Child

would have none of them. She maintains discipline in her little world. Her subjects must keep their proper stations. Dolls are not the only friends whom she loves best in a certain perspective.

If you desire to know Marjorie in her true self, see her with the dolls. They are of all sizes, complexions, and modes of attire. She never wearies of them, and is never deceived as to their realities and unrealities. One can see that they are educating her. Under their influence she is developing dainty ways and humour and a certain pathetic tenderness. You may know how her mother or her aunts have been treating her by the way she treats her dolls. The transfer of her own experience to Vicky or Lady Maria would be comic if it were not, on Marjorie's part, so real and purposeful. Her illness, with its physic and 'Hush thee, my baby,' is but a rehearsal of the dreadful sickness through which the Lady Noname—youngest of the sisterhood—must pass as soon as her ladyship's baby-mother is restored to her wonted vigour.

The thoughts of children ! How often do we strive to imagine what they are ! Now and then a question or an unlooked-for answer rends the white cloud, and we see, for a moment, into their ‘great heaven of blue.’ But, as a rule, the mystery of child-thought remains hidden, save to Him who knows us all from the least even unto the greatest, and who Himself once ‘thought as a child.’

Some love to think of the Day of Judgement, not because of the terrible things in righteousness which will then be done, but because of the unveiling, the revelation of thought and motive and conduct, and especially because of the revelation of God as He really is. The ‘small’ as well as the ‘great’ are to stand before Him. They will see Jesus, and will not be afraid to hear His voice, nor will they fear to let His eyes see into their souls. As children He who was once a child will judge them, yes, and judge also those who, in manhood and womanhood, have been content to be as little children.

Being a boy my mother never gave me a doll to play with. She would have thought such treatment of her son and heir absurd, unnatural, dangerous. My father—who, in some respects, lived on a different plane of thought—had no such scruples. He gave me dolls in plenty, but they were heathen gods, and in their very dumbness and deadness and ugliness they produced a certain impression that has never entirely worn away. Some of them I have still. Their great merit is that they have raised much money for Missions, and, oddly enough, have helped, with other things still more hideous, in the making of Missionaries. My own children have not played with these dolls of their father's childhood. They (the idol-dolls) are to me, now, a little prophetic. They recall vanished hands that once held them up before the astonished eyes of children in thousands. Further, they remind me that once, long ago—for some of them are very old—they were held in sincere, if mistaken, reverence. They represent a strange stage in the development



of tribes and races. To them they were not dolls or idols, but ideals !

I had another doll—a man-doll. But he was wholly idealistic, and of that mystic inner child-life that we grown-up people know so little about. Who gave it to me I know not. It certainly was not my mother, she was much too sober-minded to indulge either herself or her small son in fantastic dreams. Nor was it my father, for he was much too spiritual and dramatic. The nurse was a sound Methodist versed in Scripture, but not given to exposition. To tell all the story would be wearisome. In brief, it is this : My earliest creation of the imagination was a figure of pure clay moulded by divine hands outside the garden of Eden—the beginning of the vision was always outside, never inside the garden. I can see the figure now, upraised, beautiful but lifeless ; then breathed into, transfigured, moving, passing into the garden—the beautiful garden where God lived. No doubt the chapters read at family prayers, pictures on Sunday evenings, hymns sung, the talk of

a preacher's home, all helped the child's imagination. As time passed the creature changed, became less distinct, more dimly distant. Yet he was always real.

I had no doubts, and I never remember to have been terrified by awful thoughts of the God who made the creature, at least not so long as I remained at home. The one remembrance of my childhood concerning God is wholly simple, devout, joyous. I can hear the children now—singing in the Bolton and York chapels; and their voices are in unison with the thousands around the throne of God in heaven, and all are singing, 'Glory, glory, glory.' The two lessons taught to my earliest childhood were the lessons that the great Father of all so effectually taught the race in its childhood, the lessons that sing refrain-like through every part of that first and, in some respects, greatest of all poems, the Bible story of Creation—the lessons of the two keywords of Genesis—'God' and 'good.'

Backward into those days when I began to hear and think and wonder I now look,

and have nothing of any real moment to unlearn. Not the fact that God made man, or that He made him good and to be good ; not that He made him out of the dust of the earth. It is only the how—only the immaterial materialism of a little child’s imagination.

I have always had a vivid recollection of the morning when, for the first time, my mother allowed me to read out of the Bible. She opened the book at the first chapter of St. John’s Gospel. In teaching, my mother, and especially my father, treated me as a child. They knew nothing of criticism, and science then as compared with now was scarcely born. But they followed the critical, the scientific method. My father taught me, as he taught thousands of Methodist children, and very much in the same way as God inspired the unknown poets and sages of the Book of Genesis to teach the people in the centuries of the world’s childhood.

How I love the old-world beginning of all poetry and history and religion ! And love

it all the more, and drink all the more joyfully of its fountains of water of life, because I have never been dragooned into any soulless literalism of interpretation—and now never can be.

## BRICKS

GROWN-UP people, even those who are elderly, recall the bricks of their childhood. A box of bricks figures in my own very early memories.

The earliest of those memories are a bird, a pulpit, and a brick wall. They all three belong to Bolton, in Lancashire. Shadowy though they may now be, each contributed something towards those tendencies which begin their mystic work in childhood's dawn, and are rarely, if ever, wholly destroyed. The bird and the pulpit stand out distinctly, with their environment complete—the bird as the first creature of God, apart from father and mother, whom I loved and mourned, for its life, alas, ended in death and a grave in the minister's back garden; the pulpit as a throne from which, with clenched fist, I hurled defiance at the

galleryful of children who, with full-throated Lancashire zeal, were answering my father's questions. I fancy it must have been the very pulpit in which, long before, John Wesley preached to the 'lovely boys and girls,' and heard them sing.

But the brick wall is a mystery, and always has been. I know exactly where it was, but what it surrounded, or whether it surrounded anything, I do not know. It may have been quite ancient or a wall of yesterday, ill built or well built, of the utmost importance to its owner and the public or a mere excrescence on the landscape.

But, in truth, it was not the wall itself that interested me, or the bricks of which it was built, or its owner, or the purpose it served, but simply the circumstance, to me at the time most notable, that it stood by the roadside as a landmark to Peter Rothwell's house—and that was heaven. My first and fairest conceptions of heaven were borrowed, not from the Bible, not from my father's sermons, but from chorus-



hymns sung by the 'Ranters,' as they were then called, and from the Methodist 'many mansions' in Lancashire and Yorkshire which kept open doors, not only for the preachers, but also for their children. It was a long, dree walk for a small boy up to Peter Rothwell's heaven-upon-earth, but when we came to the long brick wall, the hot cobble foot-path, under its grimy redness, became a Beulah Land within sight of heaven.

It must have been this brick wall, with its rapturous associations, that led me to hail the acquisition of bricks. My great delight was to build steps and towers. I may at times have attempted houses and rudimentary chapels, and other architectural monstrosities. If so, they were quickly blotted out from my memory. But the steps and towers abide, and are as distinct in the vision of the past as the brick wall. Long afterwards, I learned that steps and towers figured largely in the building dreams and achievements of ancient peoples, whose knowledge was infantile. The great things

of history are not without their shadows or foreshadows among the little things of child life. The high uplifted temple with its ascent—‘steps unto heaven’—and the tower that might be built even unto heaven, are the embodiment of thoughts, or, at all events, of mysterious impulses and imaginings, that are represented in the nurseries and playgrounds of twentieth-century childhood. It is said that on the Eastern old-world monuments revealed by modern exploration toys have been discovered, and among the toys bricks for child-building. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun. In the *Westminster Gazette* one night I read that the newspapers of to-day, in a mad rush racing into halfpenny popularity, are really reverting to a type so ancient that one begins to wonder whether the Victorian age was not, after all, the age of decay rather than advance. ‘The news sheets of Venice in the sixteenth century were sold for a gazetta ( $\frac{1}{2}d.$ ) A halfpenny was also the price of the first English journals.’ It will, indeed, be marvellous

if somebody does not discover a whole competitive series of halfpenny morning and evening news-cylinders in baked clay among the cuneiform records of a Chaldaic museum library!

To return to this present century. It was Marjorie—wee Marjorie, white and wasted, but convalescent—who set me thinking once more about the bricks. It was Sunday afternoon. The child, in her high chair, with a round table all to herself, sat in the draught-proof chimney corner, playing with a new toy—a box of four-square picture bricks. Lady Lulu, youngest and smallest of her dolls, in Sunday dress, shared the game. The little Lord Lulu! alas, like Mephibosheth, concerning whom Theodora is being instructed, had met with a disaster to one of his legs, and had gone to Mother's hospital to be cured. What a boon to Christian mothers are Sunday picture-books and Sunday toys! So enamoured of her bricks was Marjorie—she is still monosyllabic in speech—that last evening, when I called to see how she fared, the bricks, I found,

had overflowed from the Sunday into the week-day, and were sharing, with Lady Noname and Lord and Lady Lulu (happily reunited), the vigorous attentions of my rapidly recovering little friend.

This I noted: That, whereas on Sunday the baby-child would insist on the building of a tower—up and up, and ever higher, until with a mighty crash it fell into Daddy's outstretched hand—on Monday the bricks were transformed, first into munitions of war, and then into a comedy of hide-and-seek that filled the bedroom with shrieks of laughter. It was the Russo-Japanese war on a mimic stage, and—I pray you to note this—entirely on the child's own initiative. Suddenly, like the flash in the night of the first torpedo at Port Arthur, the dainty little baby-girl hurled the first brick at the picture-screen sheltering her bed. Her father played the game, I observing a strict neutrality. With shouts of triumph the bricks flew. The Russians, dodging behind the screen, collapsed utterly. The 'Father of all his people,' perspiring and

amazed, capitulated. The tragedy ended in comedy, and—shall I confess it?—in a dance most comical. On the empty brick-box, little Lord and Lady Lulu were made to display their agility, to the imminent peril of his lordship's restored limb. Finally, they kissed, and so to sleep. For so, alike on Sundays and on week-days, now by this means and now by that, 'He giveth His beloved sleep.'

## BOOKS

**I**N days gone by Methodist Preachers, as they were then called, and their wives, and all the best teachers in schools of every kind, were scrupulously particular about books. Perhaps they were too particular. They believed in driving and riding with a tight rein. In that respect, both literally and metaphorically, they departed from the deliberately chosen habit of the father of Methodism. He did not believe in a tight rein. He had broad sympathies. Perhaps they would not be considered broad now, especially in relation to children. Nevertheless, relatively they were broad—relatively to the times in which the good man lived. We have also to remember that John Wesley was a growing man. He never ceased to grow. Even in extreme old age he lived and learned, and therefore grew,



developing himself and developing the whole system of religious and intellectual life over which, in the providence of God, he was called to preside. Remembering the main features in his career from youth to old age, I cannot doubt that he would have a little slackened the overtight reins held in the hands of preachers and teachers and saintly parents fifty or sixty years ago.

But if he were with us to-day he would tighten the reins. For have we not gone to an opposite extreme? and is not that extreme perilous to mind, and home, and heart, and Church?

Many good people whose opinion one would regard with profound respect are full of anxiety with reference to the amusements in which boys and girls of all ages indulge at the present day. I freely confess that, so far as my outlook is concerned, a greater peril threatens from a very different source. On the whole, perhaps, the recreations of to-day tend towards improvement. There is much to be said for the bracing and correcting, and therefore ennobling, influence

of amusements that demand for their exercise fresh air, self-control, and the development of the higher physical and intellectual qualities. Within the last week I have seen it noted that cycling, cricket, football, tennis, and the like are 'hitting the publican heavily'—also, I may add, the tobacconist. Of course, there is danger of excess. There is no good thing on the face of God's earth, no matter how pure and beautiful and healthful it may be, that is not capable of misuse and abuse, chiefly through excess. You may drink too much pure water, too much milk, tea, coffee ; you may eat too much whole-meal bread, fruit, and other excellent forms of food ; you may go mad on cricket and have a craze for tennis, and turn a boat into a god, and literally sacrifice to your own net, or gun, or fishing-rod. In all this sphere of life we need to remember constantly—and I who love young people and love their sports, their fun and frolic, their joy and song, would plead with all my might for good heed to the words—we need, I say, to remember the wise words of the man to

whom as families we owe so much, 'Let your forbearance be known to all men.' My friend, be you boy or girl, man or woman, when you are going to play a game, take Jesus Christ with you, and don't forget what Paul the Apostle said, and said so wisely, 'The Lord is at hand.' Then will play, like work and sorrow and the joyful friendships of life, be a means of grace to you. No, I am not afraid of the amusements of the day, provided we cultivate 'pure religion and undefiled.' But I am horribly afraid concerning the reading of the day.

Books have a subtle influence—a tremendous fascination. They are as leaven. They work silently, and therefore the more mightily. It is said that secret drinking is one of the curses of the present day. So also is secret reading, and also the secret influence of public reading. Let any wise man try an experiment. Let him go through the streets and stations of any large town and buy up a collection of cheap books, penny novelettes, halfpenny illustrated papers, and study them. Who buy these things? Who

read them? If you could search the boxes of servant-girls and the secret hoards of school-boys and school-girls, especially in holiday time; if you could turn out all the possessions of errand boys and apprentices, of factory hands, of girls employed in shops and bars and warehouses, you would very soon arrive at the solution of the problem as to how it comes to pass that this sort of literary trash pays publishers and bookstall keepers. If you want to make a fortune out of the damnation of bright young minds, you do not need to rent a public-house, or a singing or dancing saloon. You can effect your purpose much more easily and cheaply, by embarking a small capital in the publishing trade.

Take one class of young people as an example. And let us not forget that with them rests an inconceivably tremendous responsibility. I refer to the nurse-girls of England. They have charge not only of babies, but of little boys and girls at the most impressionable period of their lives. By thousands they are, for a while, wielding

a more powerful influence than the fathers, or even than the mothers. They have it in their power to preserve the unsullied purity, or to taint with deadliest poison, the spring-heads of young life. The boys and girls who are to be the men and women of the next generation are to a large extent under the influence of the nurse-girls of England. What are the nurse-girls reading? Along what lines are their thoughts running? What influences are affecting their outlook and their habits? Many, as we are thankful to know, are pure and true and wholly devoted to Christ and to all that is good. But how many are quite otherwise, and largely as the result of the books and papers they read?

But there are not only bad books, and books of doubtful tendency, and books that are slowly but most effectually insinuating doubt, and books that enfold the holiest things of life in an atmosphere of contempt or derision; there are also floods, deluges of books not in themselves bad, not by any means irreligious or immoral in their

immediate tendencies, but sickly and sickening. Books of the sort I am thinking about ought only to be stored and sold in sweet-shops; and at the door of every sweet-shop the State ought to plant a Martha-like policeman, who should severely limit the sale of chocolates and toffee and the reading of love tales and adventure stories.

Alas, how many among those who read much read absolutely nothing except novels, romances, and storyettes! They do not touch history, travel, popular science, biography, or even the higher forms of imaginative literature. With what result? It makes one shudder.

Now—I write in the early autumn—is the time to help in that which surely is a dire emergency. Every Reading Circle, if wisely conducted, may be a fountain of intellectual life and of most helpful morale in a circuit. The Wesley Guild, with its winter reading course, may turn a pure language into scores of Christian homes. The gift of a good book, a quotation in a sermon, a word fitly spoken in the class-meeting, hints by the way, turns



given to conversation in the social circle, and, above all, an open door and a hearty welcome to the minister's library, will all help. As in early Methodist days, books may become in our homes and societies God's own instruments of blessing.

## A KISS

**H**ER father had met with a slight accident. Climbing up to the new sea-wall from the shore his foot slipped, and his chin caught the edge of a concrete block. The person most concerned in the result—revealed in her presence—was Marjorie. She forgot her tea, which had just reached the sweet cake stage, tumbled down from her chair, and laid a tiny soft hand soothingly on the hot place. Then, with an eager, resolute movement, she suddenly bent her little head and ‘kissed the wound to make it well.’

I do not remember to have seen greater joy on a baby face than when Marjorie’s father, briskly putting his foot to the ground, cried out, ‘It will be all right now. Marjorie has kissed the place to make it well.’ And I quite think the child’s father was right.

Only the actual healing power was in himself—in his never-wavering faith in the ‘virtue,’ the healing, uplifting, saving virtue of love. Many a mother with a kiss lessens pain, sometimes destroying it. Her love works a wee miracle, which I would have you understand is none the less of the nature and true essence of a miracle because its working may be explained on reasonable and scientific principles. Her love has brought into play a higher law which, for the time being, suspends the lower law, and, it may be, to use a big word, contravenes it. She has done on a very small scale and in a lower sphere that which Jesus Christ does when the law of the spirit of life in Him makes us free, through His great love, from the law of sin and death.

‘Do you, then, believe in faith-healing?’

Yes, within certain limits. In Christian life, and especially in the life of Churches, more marvellous things—which is only another way of saying miracles—are wrought by faith and prayer than we ordinarily imagine. Only a few weeks ago I heard, at

first hand, a complete series of answers to prayer, direct, obvious, not to be accounted for apart from the supernatural, and, both in broad outline and minute detail, fulfilling those New Testament conditions of prayer that are so little understood.

You may retort upon me that such things are 'signs in the heights,' among the sublimities, having to do with the mighty kingdom of God on earth, and that what I began to write about a few paragraphs back was something infinitesimally small—a passing episode in a baby's life, a trifling wound laughed at in an unknown domestic circle. What! Have we not yet learnt that no eye or mind of man has ever discerned the line separating between the infinitely small and the immeasurably great? Both are to stand before the white throne in the Judgement; and in the simple, current, common-place life of the unnumbered multitudes, the two stand side by side, and threads of influence too subtle for human vision but saturated with vital force run from the great into the small, and from the small into the great, being

interwoven, as we in our blindness and folly say, 'accidentally.' Have you ever tried to measure a bacillus? Or to weigh it? Or to estimate its possibilities?

You believe, do you not, in God's signs in the heights? Why should you not believe also that His signs are to be seen in the depths—the simple, everyday depths that are about you or at your very feet? The heights you cannot scale. You can dream about them, see them afar off, wonder at their magnificence, but they are beyond your touch—

Infinite lengths beyond the bounds  
Where stars revolve their little rounds.

But the depths, where also, and just as truly, God is, are within your ken. If you can do His will on earth as the angels do it in heaven, why should you not also know His will?

There is at least one Psalm in which the music is first about the great and then about the small. You begin with your eye at the telescope, and suddenly the instrument is changed and your eye is at the microscope. All the drums and cymbals of heaven, with

myriads of chorus voices, roll forth the music of the spheres; and in the silence following you hear the cry of a baby that has fallen, and the twittering prayer of hungry sparrows on the house-top. You want me to tell you where to find a Psalm so wonderful? I will not tell you. Read the Psalter straight through from beginning to end, and when you think you have found it go on reading, until you are quite sure you have discovered the finest gold, the sweetest honey, the rarest gem.

Have you ever asked yourself, or, better still, asked Jesus Himself, why He made the central petition of the Lord's prayer so commonplace, thrusting in among the greatest things the smallest? 'Thy name,' 'Thy kingdom,' 'Thy will.' And then—'our daily bread;' and then the mystery of mercy and the triumph of God and man over the devil of evil.

Last Sunday in our little class-meeting Phyllis asked for a Gospel text beginning with the letter K. She and her sister wanted it for their school teacher. I,



thinking instantly of the Hallelujah Chorus, given by Sir Frederick Bridge's orchestra and choir on Good Friday in the Albert Hall, found the great word—'King of kings, and Lord of lords.' But Irene said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' In the end we took both texts—my great one and Irene's small one—and wrote them in red and blue on tinted paper, to the great wonderment and delight of Kathleen, who, being very small and only 'a stranger within our gates,' sat on the leader's knee, and learned Irene's little text, and found out its meaning; for she whispered, 'I always ask God to bless Daddy,' which partly accounts for the blessing that rests on the great work of 'Daddy's' present life. I wonder how many of those who are great before God and in the work they do are indebted not a little to the love and faith and prayers of those little ones who believe that God loves those whom they love, and that when children knock at God's door He Himself opens the door unto them? The next day little Kathleen fell into a riot of

Bank Holiday revelry. But at nightfall, chancing to see her, I asked if she remembered the text. Her hands came together, and in a hushed voice she said, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' I concluded, therefore, that, as of old, 'God had called the child.'

Love is the salvation of prayer, and the motive force of faith. It saves prayer from selfishness and weariness, and gives it intensity. Faith works by love, and repays the service of Love by making it all-victorious. It was the love in Marjorie's kiss that kindled the faith that helped the healing.

Years ago I heard two doctors discuss a subject closely allied to this. They both had had wide experience, one of them in ordinary family practice, the other as one of the greatest brain and nerve specialists of his day. They both unhesitatingly declared their belief in faith-healing within certain limits, each contributing to the discussion illustrative facts from his own experience. But this they insisted on as the result of

prolonged observation, that such healings were as truly controlled by law as are those which are brought about by medical skill. The power of mind over matter is a fact of daily experience, and already the laws under which the working may be set up, and, being set up, may be directed and limited, are revealing themselves. The highest art in surgery is directed to the safeguarding of Nature, that she may be free and unhindered in doing her own work. This is true of the simplest domestic surgery, and of the loftiest exercise of trained skill in the army surgeon's field hospital. It is Nature, not the surgeon, not the nurses, not Mother with her simple little appliances, but Nature who does the actual work. She is the great Healer. In tree and bird, and fish and beast, and also in these wonderful bodies of ours, she is ever working—and working according to the great 'designs' of her Sovereign Lord, who, as the great Hallelujah text tell us, is Lord of lords, and Lord of Kingsley's Madam How and Lady Why, as well as King of

kings. Are we the friends of Nature? Then are we friends, to that extent, of Nature's Lord. And those hidden, subtle, all-potent forces of Faith, Hope, Love, are ours, because they are His. He lends them to us, teaches us how to use them, silently influences our minds in their use, and so, on the lower slopes of the mountain of God, and in a multitude of small ministries, we, unconsciously, do works that are near akin to the miracles of Jesus. Sometimes we venture so far as to call the healing, the restoring deeds of men and women who are saturated with faith and hope and love, 'miracles of grace.' But how rarely do we realize that in so labelling them we are giving the generic, severely scientific, strictly theological description!

Will any one have the temerity, at this time of day, to deny that Hope plays a great part in the life-work of doctors and nurses? And Faith also? But the chief attendant and noblest friend and collaborateur of these companions of Jesus, as St. Paul has long ago taught us, is Love. And what is a

‘kiss’ but the outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace, so divine, and at the same time so human, which we call Love ?

I remember once seeing a baby child who had never been kissed. It was, indeed, a pitiful sight. Let me commend to your study the place occupied by a kiss in the Holy Book. Was it without a purpose that Jesus Christ, in telling His greatest story, made the very centre and soul and climax of the prodigal’s return the father’s kiss ? Why, again and again, in the New Testament Letters, are Christian people told to greet one another with a holy kiss or with the kiss of peace ? If you had a little child who needed the teaching and influence of a Sunday-school class, would you care to entrust that child to a teacher who was ashamed to be seen kissing father or mother ? Is there anything, in all her work of recovery and restoration, of soul-healing and comforting, that the Church of Jesus Christ to-day more needs than the power to ‘kiss the place and make it well,’ than the power to

'lay it on His shoulders rejoicing,' than the power to 'run and fall on His neck and kiss Him'? How many women are waiting outside the crowd, until they are permitted to draw near in whelming sorrow and love to kiss the Master's feet! I hear the cry in the desolate wilderness—

O let *me* kiss His bleeding feet,  
And bathe and wash them with my tears.



## BUDS

THE tops of the fruit-trees are touched with white. The leaf buds, too, are showing the delicate inner greenness, hidden through the weeks of winter within the brown protecting bracts.

The road beyond the garden wall is bordered by woodland trees. They are tell-tale trees in these early days of spring. You might accurately measure the sunshine on this side and that side of the street by the length of the pale green infolded buds of the chestnut-trees. Or am I to infer from the differences that there is special store of virtue in the early morning sunshine? Certain it is that the afternoon sun, working upon the chestnut-buds on this side, has been out-rivalled by the morning sun on that side.

The plum-trees and even the pears in

our garden are racing the almond-tree that grows in a sheltered corner. Yesterday the plums bade fair to win. But this morning a dainty flower in pink and white peeped over the garden wall, as though to bid me God-speed. To-night, returning from the city, I saw the sister almond-tree, that stands full in the eye of the sunrising in another garden on the sea front, and, lo, all her branches were a glory of rosy white shining in the twilight.

Of old in Eastern lands they called the almond the 'Watch Tree.' It stood in the gateway of the year, the first of all the trees to blossom into promise of fruitfulness. It watched for God's sunshine, for the warm south wind, for those mystic forces of nature that make for new life, new hope, new power to bless man and bird and every living thing.

In English gardens almond-trees seldom bear fruit. Though I know a minister who once had quite a crop of almonds on a fine tree in the Thames Valley. But do we not love it, as we love snowdrops and

violets and primroses? It was on a lonely spot, named at first after the Watch Tree, that Jacob dreamed the loveliest of all dreams—the dream that in the end helped to make him an Israelite indeed, changing him from a contemptible cheat into a prince. How much we owe to that dream—to the Luz that became Bethel, to the vision of angels and the ladder up into heaven, and God ever watching whether we wake or sleep—watching through the dreary winter, and still watching when, in the stirring springtime, the buds ‘by green leaf sealed’ break into beautiful life! It is not in the tempestuous winter alone that we need God, but even more in the joyful springtime.

All the young life in our garden is in more peril now than at any other time of the year. When you are saying your prayers night and morning, or in church and school, you ought to remember the market gardeners and fruit growers. Many a small farmer who depends on his orchards or strawberry-fields for the rent goes to bed night by

night wondering, fearing, dreading for the buds that timidly, during these spring days, are casting away their warm winter clothing. What will happen? Will the wind change in the night? Will a frost blast the hope of spring? I have at this moment a vision of a cluster of Methodist villages in the South country where, to a large extent, the people are dependent upon the cherry orchards that this very week will be tinted with the loveliness of a bright hope, and that by one sharp blast might wither in an hour. Shall we not remember the fruit farmers in Berkshire and Kent, in Devon and Herefordshire, and other parts of this fair England, asking God in our prayers to spare the buds, and to prosper the trees and flowers, upon the fate of which so much of human comfort and well-being depends?

All the Wesleys loved a garden. John, as we know from his recently discovered diaries, was quite an experienced gardener, working at Epworth and Wroot and in Savannah with his own hands among the flowers and fruits. Even in the midst of

the furious excitements and the swift travelling of the Evangelical Revival one country house with a garden claimed his notice. Upon that garden he must have bestowed not a little thought and personal care. He planted fruit-trees, and so laid out his Kingswood plot of ground as to reproduce the memory of the charming Rectory garden at Wroot—the garden with a summer-house and a shaded walk, in which he used to write sermons for his father in summer days, and gather roses for his mother and sisters. There is one hymn, written by his brother Samuel, who lived for so many years at Westminster, under the shadow of the great Abbey, that recalls the garden at Epworth :

The morning flowers display their sweets,  
And gay their silken leaves unfold,  
As careless of the noontide heat,  
As fearless of the evening cold.

Nipt by the wind's untimely blast,  
Parched by the sun's directer ray,  
The momentary glories waste,  
The short-lived beauties die away,

How much of personal reminiscence and

family sorrow are woven into the texture of this pathetic hymn !

So blooms the human face divine,  
When youth its pride of beauty shows ;  
Fairer than spring the colours shine,  
And sweeter than the virgin rose.

But no Wesley could long permit his thoughts to linger amongst the withered flowers. There were wells of deep joy, because springs of quenchless hope, in every one of the Wesleys. Nor could any one of them allow personal joy or sorrow so to absorb thought as to shut out the wider interests of the kingdom of God upon earth. The hymn sings of another springtime in which the lustre will be brighter and the bloom ever-enduring, in which the beautiful life rescued from wintry blasts will be for ever 'safe from diseases and decline.' You remember how the hymn closes, with what a note of triumph, in what defiance of evil :

Let sickness blast, let death devour,  
If heaven must recompense our pains ;  
Perish the grass, and fade the flower,  
If firm the word of God remains.



The Bible teaches us one of the simplest and yet greatest of all lessons. Our personal hopes and fears are interwoven with those which belong to all the realms of God, in nature, in providence, in the great kingdom of His grace. The budding fruit-trees in your little garden, for which just now you have so much tender concern, are God's trees. He cares for them and for all the life around them. Your children, if they have been brought up to love gardens, and woods, and fields, and hedgerows, will not think it unseemly if at family prayer they hear father remembering the budding fruit-trees and the cornfields.

Is it possible to think of the buds and their history without also thinking of the little ones in our homes, and of all the unseen influences to which they are exposed as the years of their childhood pass?

And our circuit, with its chapels and schools and guilds; with its scattered village societies, some of them quite ancient and others of yesterday, and its newly enclosed garden plots—are not similar laws governing

it, and may it not, in all its variety of life and interest, be interwoven with the budding orchards and the bonnie bairns in our prayers?

I have heard men of large experience in Mission work say that the fisherman's craft has been helpful to them in the work that Jesus Christ has given them to do. Surely garden lore and fruit craft are even more helpful, both in the home and in the Church. Why did God plant a garden eastward in Eden, and why did He assign to man, as his first duty on this fair earth, the task of dressing and keeping the garden? And why, in the vision of the great Hereafter, has He replanted the garden, with its river of water of life, and its tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruits, and leaves that are for the healing of the nations?

## SONG

**M**AY is the singing time. In woods and gardens, and by the rivers of water Nature herself says, 'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.' And many things that prosy folk would say have neither voice nor breath find ways to join the concert. In our little front garden tulips, despite dogs and cats and errand boys, stand erect. They are radiant with colour, except those that are white as the driven snow. Like singers in church, they stand up before the Lord, for those who have ears to hear singing and making a joyful noise unto Him.

Why should tulips set one thinking of 'trumpets also and shawms'? Ever since I was a wee bairn 'shawms' have been a splendid mystery in my Sunday thoughts. To this day I have not the most remote

idea what they are or were, nor have I any knowledge of tulips beyond that which comes of the sight of my eyes. I pray you do not trouble to look up shawms, or tulips either, in your dictionaries. I very much prefer to have them, as they have always been in my thoughts, invested in aureoles of mystery. Dictionaries spoil the romance and silence the music. Terrible disillusionists are dictionaries. Three rows of them at this moment are glaring upon me from the bookshelves—necessary evils, strong, solid, aggressive, eminently instructive, containing much information concerning poetry and music, birds and flowers, including, no doubt, shawms and tulips, but without either song or singing, and utterly destructive to dreams, fairies, and idealism. I never look upon a dictionary without recalling a vision of a dear old tutor of mine on whom I once called. The dinner table was laid, flowers were blooming in the College gardens, birds were singing in the shrubberies and in the orchard down the lane. But he sat bolt upright in a straight-backed chair, nursing, not

the baby, but a huge Greek Lexicon. I am sure Nature meant him to be an artist, or a poet, or a musician, or a writer of bairns' fairy tales. Lexicons transformed him into a monument of learning. Since then he has joined the choir and learnt to sing.

On this morning of sunshine everything that hath breath is singing a new song. I walk down the garden path towards the fruit-trees, white and pink with blossom, and every flower sings its message of triumphant life and radiant hope. The trees are literally humming with the music of the bees. The atmosphere is full of harmony. One has difficulty in restraining the gladness that would shout aloud.

Why is it that in the garden on this May-day morning—this Sun-day morning—I hear everywhere choruses of joy and praise? Suffer me to confess. I have come from a missionary meeting. Every year for more than twenty years past I have never failed to attend all the meetings and hear all the sermons of our own Missionary May Festival. This year a very madness of song has kept

me away from all the meetings except one, and that one, from start to finish, was song, and nothing but song.

Climbing the Alpine staircases of Exeter Hall I heard, far up the heights, the Excelsior of children's voices. They were singing like full-throated thrushes, and blackbirds, and linnets, and skylarks—singing a song of gladness, making that joyful melody that John and Charles Wesley taught children in schools and the people in market-places and village greens, and on the moorsides of Lancashire and Yorkshire. No more tuneful missionary meeting have I ever attended. I laughed and cried all the time, and forgot the days and years of my pilgrimage, and dreamed that I was once more a child in my father's house waiting for the circuit phaeton, keeping guard over clubs, and gods, and heathen dresses, and missionary boxes, proud of the paraphernalia that used to belong in those olden times to village Methodism in its missionary passion. It was a wonderful meeting. The Chairman set the children cheering, and the faces of



the people lit up with joy. I saw a dear old grannie a dozen forms away hemmed in by bairns, and verily I could almost have counted the wrinkles on her beautiful face by reason of the light that shone there.

No speaker was out of tune, nor out of time. Every one did exactly what he was told to do, and said what he ought to have said. It was rather a dreary day outside. The rain fell fitfully, and the streets were a wee bit dree. Nevertheless, the Hall was almost filled. In coming years, if the Methodists of London do not forget the gladness of that Saturday afternoon, they will crowd the Hall, and cry out for a new Hall, bigger, their very own, and without Alpine heights.

The centre of each speech was a song. One speaker, Mr. Bone, who is on the wing again for Canton, reminded me of the tulips and shawms. He wore the festival dress of a Buddhist priest—brilliant robes of rose-coloured silk and white and gold, and the robes sang like the tulips. So did the act

of unrobing, and even the hanging of the discarded raiment over the front of the platform. But most of all sang the face of the disrobed missionary and the very intonations of his voice. It was singing all the time—queer, quaint, pathetic, Oriental singing. He himself thought his singing poor. The children did not think so.

The last speaker, all the way from Matabeleland, with all manner of show-things on the chairs behind him, sang also. He knew how to make the children see the kraals, and the people dwelling therein, and the children to whom Methodism has carried the message of God's great joy. In a strange tongue with plaintive voice he sang a hymn. It was an imitation of the singing of Matabele children, who, at a moment when his own inner spirit was bowed down with sorrow and loneliness and despair, sang in the native Christian schoolhouse, and, like the wind of God, drove away the mists. Surely the voices of children are as God's south wind that makes the spices flow and the fruit-trees bloom, and that sets the

nest-building birds a-song with springtide gladness.

There was not only a first and last speaker, but also one in the midst of the meeting. He, too, made a speech that from beginning to end was a poem, a symphony, a wonderful song. We have all heard of Mr. Bateson and his work for soldiers and for Temperance in the Army. He told a simple story, like the rest of the speakers, giving the children of their best without waste of words, naturally, and in joyful speech. He told stories about soldiers' songs that, as Christian passwords, have rung out on many a South African battlefield, and in the Soudan, and among the frontier mountains of India. How the singing of the Methodist soldiers is ringing round the world! How it breaks out at unexpected times and in unlikely places! Walking along the Strand, he heard, from the top of an omnibus, the conductor shouting to him '494,' the password dear to British Christian soldiers—'God be with you till we meet again.' How the story recalled the past! I heard the soldiers

singing at Aldershot and Shorncliffe, and the Marines in Mr. Kelly's services long years ago in Chatham.

In the springtime we think of awakening life, and singing that can be heard, and fragrances that fill all the air with a sense of joy and fruitfulness and beauty. But the spring also has its darkness and sleeping-time. Have you never watched the daisies at nightfall go to 'by-bye'? On Saturday night one of my children brought to her mother a pot of marguerites. The next morning the white flowers with open face beheld the glory of the sunshine, and 'glad drank in the solar ray.' But on Sunday evening, when the people were singing 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,' the daisies drooped their heads and fell fast asleep. Outside in the little front garden the tulips, open through the day, gently closed their doors, and slept in peace. Is there no song in the sleep of the flowers? Is there no mystic message of God for missionaries in their loneliness, and missionaries' wives, and waiting native churches, when

darkness falls, and there is no appearance of life, and no sound breaking the silence, and nothing visible to human eyes or audible to human ears to tell where God's Hand is or what His power may be secretly doing? His flowers sleep, and the birds, and, one way or another, all living things. And resting-times are good. There is blessing even in darkness and silence. God takes care that it shall be so. He never slumbers, never sleeps, but is ever watching, and ever giving to His beloved whilst they sleep.

## KNOTS

MY friend who on rare occasions graces by his presence a corner of the restaurant table at which a few choice souls dine day by day, produced a little packet of coloured cards which he insinuatingly unwrapped and exposed for sale. We all fell victims to his blandishments, and bought the cards, more indeed than we needed, and in turn used them as means of persuasion, desiring to induce those to whom we gave them to attend *the* Bazaar. There may have been that week bazaars in all parts of the country, but for my enthusiastic friend, and therefore for a great many other people, there was only one Bazaar in all the world.

It was his hypnotic suggestion that left me without choice when he further insinuated the thought that I might address a



few remarks to the Bazaar. As a protection against imaginary peril, I prevailed upon one of my daughters to accompany me. At the door of the saleroom we saw flags fluttering in the street breeze, and two stalwart policemen guarding the entrance. 'Ticket,' said No. 666, and then it fell upon me in terror that I had forgotten my ticket. Would the policeman deal with me as the steward dealt with Jabez Bunting when he went to the Lovefeast? What humiliation if I were driven from the door or compelled to pay over again! The wisdom of parental dependence upon daughters happily justified the precaution I had taken. Like a flash of lightning came the retort of the girl behind me, 'Oh, he's part of the show.' The policeman roared, and, under cover of his roar, we passed through the door and climbed the staircase.

It was an iron staircase, worn with the traffic of years, narrow, winding, suggestive of economies in space, and not in the least of the kind the County Council School Authority would to-day approve. The room

aloft also bore many signs of long use and of old-fashioned ways. There were not many persons present, for the hour, though late for a bazaar, was still too early for the greater number of the people belonging to it. They are all hard workers, and I do not suppose there is to be found in all the congregation a single person of leisure. I mounted a platform, flanked on the right by a bell-tent with straw peeping from underneath the curtain, and containing 'a tiger cat,' which all the while I was hankering to see, but never really did see, being apprehensive that zoological predilection might suffer a shock. It may be that the tiger cat had not arrived for the day, or that he slept after a heavy meal. I listened for his voice, but neither roar nor purr broke the silence of the room.

There were six parsons on the platform, and a doctor, and a member of Parliament, and a lady mayoress who had come to open the bazaar. My indomitable and enthusiastic friend inflicted upon me the duty of speech-making. Now, if there is one thing

that I dislike more than another, it is the making of speeches at Bazaars. One never knows what to say, nor how to say it, nor what the result will be when it is said. I constantly envy the aptitude of some men for speech-making. They always know the right thing to say, and are fertile in humours that make folk laugh, and in nonentities that do no harm. Whilst my predecessors were pouring out rivulets of eloquence, I was looking around in moral desperation for some peg on which to hang a topic. But neither peg nor topic appeared. In front of me was a little ice hut, that is to say, a place in which ices were to be sold, and a vast bran tub, and at one end of the room a flower stall, and at the other end a refreshment marquee, and here and there stalls with Oriental trimmings, good women in pretty gowns, and a little girl, daintily dressed, sitting on a form right under my eyes, busily plying a needle on a piece of embroidery.

At the very last moment, on the eve of the doom for which there was no escape, my good angel came to the rescue and bade me

look not up, or around, but down upon the bare floor, and there I found a speech on which, in the joy of the moment, I felt that any man with a tongue in his head might have discoursed for an hour.

The speech was written in pine-knots scattered all over the old floor of that ancient schoolroom—a floor well and truly laid by carpenters long, long years ago, and all the timbers, as far as I could see and judge, were of the soundest and best. But the children's feet through many generations, tramping the boards day by day, had worn away the soft tissue of white pine, leaving the knots like little hillocks scattered up and down, with tiny markings running around them in patterns. I would like, were it possible, to have the floor polished just as it lies; and then the pine-knots, to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, would tell their tale of little feet, and of the old master—one of the most famous day-school masters in England—and of the generations of pupil teachers, and other teachers who have come and gone. These old churches and school

houses and classrooms, how sacred their memories, how precious the influence they have wielded in family circles, and how tenderly should we tread the ways now deserted of the people who raised them !

These knots in the pine planks, what tales they tell, what songs they sing ! The pine woods in the spring of the year when the sap rises, and especially at nightfall and after a shower of rain and days of sunshine—what fragrance ! How healing, refreshing, life-restoring ! Is anything more soothing or solemn than the silent pine woods, or more beautiful than the stately coroneted trees when the westering sun touches their trunks, and brings out the radiancy of colour, and casts shadows on the brown carpet at their feet and on the masses of bracken uncurling through the red ruins of bygone autumns ?

Life, and health, and peace—

that is what comes to one in thought and dream, and not infrequently in sober fact, in these pine woods. I never wonder that

ancient peoples, having access to mountainsides clothed with these trees of the Lord, should have conventionalized all their wealth of joy and hope into a 'tree of life,' or that the earliest and latest of the Bible writers should have borrowed the mystic tree to serve as a symbol of all that life and health and peace that comes to us through Him in whom was life and the life was the light of men.

The knots are a silent witness of life—more abundant life—living force—possibilities of the present, hope for the future. Each knot suggests a branch, and each branch means the gathering of more and more energy from sun and rain and atmosphere, from the changes that come throughout the year, month by month; yes, and even from winter storms, and from the unseen but all-potent alchemy of Mother Earth. And each branch and branchlet means more shade and beauty and fruitfulness, more girth and strength also to that parent trunk that will one day build school-houses for the children, with desks, and forms, and



doors, and window-sashes; and masts for merchant ships, and scaffold-poles for the building of palaces, and beams for the roofing of churches, and shingles for the cottage homes of empire-builders far hence.

Do you desire access to the joy of the pine woods? Make friends with the squirrels! They know. So, also, do the birds, and all the creatures of God to whom He has given the trees that they may not only feed and nest, but sing in the branches thereof.

This bazaar—to come back to everyday, matter-of-fact realities—what does it mean? It stands for a church of God planted in the midst of a desolate place where the people need—God only knows how sorely—life and health and peace.

See! a woman rises on the platform. Who is she? What does she represent? Why is she here? She is the wife of the mayor of the borough, and represents all that ministry of municipal government that is, or should be, a tree of life. The member of Parliament by her side rises. To some he is simply Whig or Tory, as the case may

be. But to God, to his own inner conscience and purpose and hope, and to the children in all the schools planted in the midst of privation and suffering, he also stands for a tree of life, the leaves of which may be for the healing of the nation. And next, the doctor rises, who, also, is a minister of God, and a fighter against the work of the devil, as, in truth, is every pine-tree. And, last of all, the parsons, who are what they are and where they are that they may in still loftier ways carry on the same work.

It matters little what all these persons may say with their lips ; or what judgement you may pronounce upon the pine-knots in the old school flooring ; or what may be your opinion concerning women who toil night and day with busy fingers that they may help God's great tree of life in the only way, perhaps, possible to them ; or what you may think of this little maid plying her needle and silks as for dear life whilst we platform folk are speech-making — all this matters little. What God hears is the song of the pine woods, the song of all true childhood

and manhood and womanhood, the song of Methodism in the glory of its youth—

Life, and health, and peace.

Shall we not say, also, the song of the Methodism that is to be, in this and every other place where, in the renewal of her youth, she is shaking herself from the dust, and in all her leafy bowers is putting on a new array?

## A GARDEN

**T**HE race began its work of life in a garden ; it died and rose again in a garden ; it will attain its fullest glory in a garden.

‘And the Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden ; and there He put the man whom He had formed.’

‘Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid.’

‘And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, yielding its fruit every month ; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.’

How many thoughts fragrant of Mother Earth and growing trees and herbs and flowers one might cull from the holiest of all books—a book in which nature shines with

the purest light, and, all things considered, with the kindest light! And how much garden lore one might quote from the stories of great men and women of note, and nations that have reached celebrity and left their imprint upon the history of the world! For in all the evolution of art, and science, and literature, and nationality, gardens have played the part which God designed them to play when He Himself planted the first garden, and stocked it with fruit-trees, and made provision for its nourishment and husbandry, and for its power to bless the surrounding lands.

Years ago, when it fell to my lot frequently to tramp through the lanes and fields that lie on either side of the Avon and its tributaries, I used to wonder whether, in the very nature of things, Shakespeare could have been the man he was but for the education he received among the elms and oak-trees of Warwickshire, and from the gardens that everywhere in those days abounded around the place of his birth. In that same land, where every field and woodland and river bank

blossoms into a garden, a woman of wealth desired to build a house to the glory of God. She sent the greatest architect England then possessed to do her bidding, and gave him freedom to build and carve as he listed, sparing no cost and imposing no fetters on the play of human fancy. All the garden in the midst of which the builders wrought became a studio. Men skilled in the carving of wood or stone went forth to study nature as they found her, in her simplest and homeliest garb. They brought fruits and flowers from cottage gardens, and nests from the woods, and trailing leaves, and all that was most characteristic of the countryside for which they were preparing a house of God. And the church to this day is a dream of beauty—a church in a garden, reflecting in all its adornment the beauty in the midst of which it is enshrined.

Was not that the intention of the Lord God when He began the upbuilding of the race in a garden?

I recall a square garden plot outside the gates of an ancient city. It may really have



been a small garden, but in my memory it has always lived as the largest garden I have ever seen in the possession of a Methodist preacher. Like the garden city in the Revelation, it lay foursquare, with walls great and high—old walls, with stone copings, over the face of which fruit-trees were trained. In one corner stood a summer house, also foursquare—a sort of Tower of Babel, that, to my childish imagination, had been built defiantly heavenward. I could vow it had at least three storeys. What endless delight there was in climbing the tower and pretending Bible stories or times of war! I lived in those days a secluded life, not being permitted to take walks abroad, save on rare occasions. My outdoor life was spent, for the most part, in the high-walled garden. To this day the influence of its scented herbs and trees and flowers abides with me; so also does one curious memory—the memory of a little girl who must have lived in a house near by. On summer days her face would appear above the garden wall, which I had no

means of climbing. She must have had a name, but I never dared to ask it, and I cannot remember to have seen her anywhere else, except above the garden wall. She figured in my thoughts as a fairy. In some undefined way she transformed the garden, which she only overlooked, into a paradise, and under the spell of the fairy vision I learned to commune with all the living things of that mystic garden world.

Last Saturday the Boy and I visited a house five hundred years old. There were many gardens, in odd corners, curiously laid out, with turf springy to the tread, and beds neatly kept, and old-fashioned flowers, and ancient shrubs, and a summer house that reminded me of the house that John Wesley built in the Rectory garden at Wroot. Would that some fairy would give me that ghostly house and fair garden!

Coming home, I found a new book in sage green and coral pink, that had come to the house in my absence; its title *Every Man his own Gardener*, by John Halsham, author of *Idlehurst*; with pictures, some roughly

drawn to illustrate such matters as the tying of standard trees, or the pruning of roses, or the framing of a hotbed, and others painted by the sun through a lens in dainty tints. I became enamoured with the book, and the more so because I found it to be primarily designed for those who, with little or no experience, are possessors of just as much garden as they can manage single-handed. The following appeals to me. Transcribing, I translate, as you also, in reading, may do, into terms that belong to your own life—

‘If there be one pursuit that can be commended as a general recreation, a hobby good for all temperaments, ranks, and employments, it is gardening. It is a stand-by that will come in with its solid results to fill any hiatus in the progress of our loftier concerns. If a party go into the cold shade of opposition, or a company into liquidation; if a book, a picture, a play be damned, it is good to be able to shut one’s gate on the mad world, and find one’s marrowfats podding, one’s nectarines reddening, faithful

to their master's hand, heartening him to survive the earthquakes, even as they have done. There is no vote of censure, no critical cat-o'-nine-tails, which can touch that part of his work; and if he cares to try the popular suffrage again, he may find that people who have trodden on his pearls are not by any means incapable of relishing his peaches.'

There are briers besetting every path,  
And a cross in every lot.

No one better knows the trials, or the uses, of adversity than an amateur gardener. And, perhaps, if we take them aright, there is no occupation so fraught with beneficent lessons—lessons humbling to human pride and encouraging to the grace of patience. John Wesley was a great gardener, and to that I attribute in large measure the fact that, in all the spiritual husbandry of his later life, he never lost patience. Hope sprang everlasting and immortal in the little evangelist's great soul. And one reason why he achieved success on the whole was

that he never recognized the hopelessness of failure in detail. I quite think the Apostle James must have been a gardener. He was much given to observation: 'Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient over it, until it receive the early and the latter rain.' My new book, though given wholly to practical things of daily gardening, has glints and drifts of sacred philosophy that may well engage our admiration and set us thinking. For instance—

'Only those who have fought their way through adversities, and have made their mistakes and lost their ventures, know the times of refreshing which come after a good day's work fairly put through—some ten minutes' idleness when one sits on the wheelbarrow handle (a thing in itself a gift of the expert, not to topple the machine over) before the tea-bell rings, in a November twilight when the weed-fire smoke drifts ghostly about the dark brown plots of the trim-finished garden, or when the sunset catches the daffodils in an afternoon of

March. Then it is that all the old failures and crosses, work done in vain, the needless cares, the groundless fears, all the seeds that never came up, all the frosted blossoms and grub-gnawed fruit, all the droughts and floods slip, as by a silent enchantment, into their places in the puzzle, and we know wherein lies the true good of gardening, and, perhaps, of the common businesses of life besides.'



## ‘GOOD’

COINCIDENCES — things happening together—are often curious and sometimes startling. One such befell last week. A friend in the North country, writing on another subject, incidentally told me that on the previous Sunday evening his enjoyment of the hymn they sang at home was marred by the feebleness of a single line, or rather of one word which, in a hymn otherwise beautiful, always jarred upon his innate sense of poetical fitness. It was the word ‘good’; and the line which, had he been a poet, he would fain have changed, giving it a turn of expression nobler and more befitting the awful grandeur of the subject, was this—

He died to make us good.

Now it so happened that on that same

Sunday evening, the breadth of many counties apart, another little family group stood or knelt around the piano, while mother played children's hymns according to her wont. Each child has the privilege of selecting his or her favourite hymn, which is always sung without question. Phyllis, for I know not how many Sunday nights in succession, has invariably chosen the very hymn that my friend sang—

There is a green hill far away,  
Without a city wall,  
Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
Who died to save us all.

How differently, with what mystic response to personal temperament, and to the daily history of our spiritual struggle, do the words of hymns strike us! We cannot always understand why it is that certain words touch some minds as with the potency of a magic wand, whilst on other hearts they either produce no impression whatever, or an effect precisely contrary, and, it may be, irritating.

Why this hymn of the ‘green hill far away’ has for me so strange a charm, I do not know. But thinking on the matter—and my friend’s letter has brought it home to me with realistic force—I have come to the conclusion that of all the hymns in the English language ancient or modern there is no one which so appeals to my own conscience and inner consciousness. That any one should dream of touching a single word is something unthinkable, near akin to a proposal to change a detail in the ornamentation of the altar of incense or the Ark of the Covenant with its overshadowing cherubim. However frequently the hymn is sung, it never fails, in its every line and word, to tug at my heart-strings. I think that one reason why the hymn, just as it stands on the page, speaks with peculiar pathos and tenderness to many persons, is the fact that it gives the main truths of our redemption in Christ Jesus in words so simple, and doctrinally so true, that even the very little children in our homes cannot help understanding what they mean.

We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains He had to bear ;  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good,  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.

As I write the words there comes back a vivid remembrance of the awe that fell upon us whilst we were singing them on that same Sunday evening. The reason why with special force the hymn at this line, 'He died to make us good,' wrapt the whole of the little family group in unspoken sympathy had to do mainly with the word 'good.' It is just now the central word in a small child's life. Day by day, at home and at school, in her work and in her play, the battle she is fighting—and it is sometimes a furious battle—rages around this word 'good.' She wants to be good ; she understands what goodness is ; the deepest desire of her little heart, especially when at nightfall she kneels down to say her prayers,

is that she may be ‘good.’ No grown-up man or woman in all the circle of my acquaintance is just now making a harder or a braver fight for goodness than this child of seven years. There is in her, as in so many of the little boys and girls we all know, exuberance of life, passion, frolic, self-will, and, alas! as in all of us, underlying selfishness. She knows that this and that are wrong; that to disobey, to think about herself first and foremost, to strive after her own way in every little thing as well as in everything that is greater, is bad. Little by little she is winning the victory, though she does not know it. And however much she may at times revel in naughtiness, she, in the deep places of her heart, hates it all, and many a time says to herself—‘Oh, how nice it would be if only I could be, always, good!’ It all circles around this one word ‘good.’ And it so happens that on that Sunday night we could none of us help thinking of the child, and silently praying for her and for ourselves as with quivering voices we once more sang the words—

He died that we might be forgiven,  
He died to make us good.

No, my friend, not for all the gold of all  
the Indies, would I part with that little  
Saxon word from the great hymn.

There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin ;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven, and let us in.

Is there not a far-away sense in which it is true of us who would like to be Christian, that is to say, Christlike, in our fatherhood and motherhood, in the teaching and helping of children—true, that in proportion as we are personally 'good' we have it in our power, in any sense and to any extent, to 'pay the price of sin'? If a child does wrong and is punished, say by naturally and inevitably reaping the result of its wrongdoing, and not merely by endurance of inflicted strokes of chastisement, who suffers most keenly? Who is it that shares the weight of the little cross that Nature herself compels the child to carry? Is it not the mother? And will not the tooth of pain be



the sharper, and the pressure of the cross-sorrow the heavier, just so far as the mother has the mind of Christ and a heart that throbs to the heart-beats of her dear Lord, who ‘hung and suffered there’? And is it not in proportion as the mother thus suffers that she has it in her power to help the child by influencing her for good? She knows by the instinct of her own heart, to some extent at least, what it meant for Him to ‘pay the price of sin.’ And every such mother will sing, with a depth of meaning and emotion impossible to describe, the infinitely precious words with which this great child’s hymn closes—

Oh, dearly, dearly, has He loved,  
And we must love Him too,  
And trust in His redeeming blood,  
And try His works to do.

## RAIN

**I**T fell, a gracious rain, hour by hour through the after-part of the day, and, if one may judge from roadways and gardens, all night. Everybody, I fear, would not think it gracious, for morning brought thousands of Lancashire folk to London in quest of that yearly open-air frolic known as the 'Cup Tie,' and one could not help picturing the woebegone condition of men and women after a weary night journey turned out into the wet streets and pitilessly pelted. It must indeed, for the many thousands of visitors, and for the players themselves, have been football under difficulties, until the April sun, ever fighting for victory, conquered the clouds and shone forth on the beautiful gardens of the Crystal Palace.

It so happened that last Sunday week,

among the notices given by the stewards to the preacher in the vestry, one concerned 'The Recreation Society.'

In reading it to the congregation I thought it just and wise to remind the people that this Society was one of many good things that came a few years ago as the result of a revival of religion. Many young men and young women were converted at that time under the preaching of one of the Connexional Evangelists. They forthwith began to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, going out into the wilderness to seek and to save the lost. Open-air preaching, with prayer-meetings, and a nobler pattern of Wesley Guild meetings, and many other fruits of personal religion, were harvested from the seed of that memorable sowing-time. The Recreation Society was an indirect result. In announcing the meeting, I recalled its history, and said that in a very true sense Jesus Christ was the President of the Society, and that if He was permitted to watch over the play, as well as the work and the fight and the

sorrow of life, no harm could come, but untold good. At the close of the service a man met me at the road-corner and found grave fault with what I had said. He seemed to think that football and cricket were wholly and hopelessly bad.

Will the time come when in all the great organizations for English play Jesus Christ will be allowed to hold an honoured place? If at the gates when the turnstiles swing the people one by one into the field, Jesus Christ in visible form came—One amongst them once more—would the keepers of the gate let Him in with joyful words of welcome? Or would they in terror try to keep Him out? There is nothing more needed in England to-day than the atmosphere of Christian manliness and womanliness to pervade all the business and all the play of daily life.

This Recreation Society of ours, child though it is of a revival of religion, and rich in Church membership, is not quite as perfect as it might be. I am afraid that sometimes—not so much in the actual play

as in the transaction of committee business—we fail to remember the Unseen Presence of our Lord, and say things that we would never dream of saying if the veil were rent, and our eyes were opened, and we saw Him in our midst. Is it not thus also in all our Church meetings, notably so in Quarterly Meetings? The other night I heard one of the Common Councilmen of the world's greatest city say that in the meetings of the City Council there was less bickering, and more Christian courtesy and consideration one for another, than in many of our Church Courts. Is it true that the world can set an example to the Church? Is it true that the bottom reason why the work of God does not ceaselessly thrive in some circuits is because they who are members of one household are not of one mind, or, worse still, not of one heart? We ought never to complain concerning differences of opinion: they are natural, and therefore healthy. Life would be dull without them, and might become fruitless. But when people differ, and do not agree to differ, when they

speaking angry words and impute unchristian motives, the Christ is driven far away and the blessing of God's sunshine and of His gracious rain is withheld.

Many questions in daily life are very difficult to answer; and such questions, it seems to me, are plentiful in proportion as we lead lives full of springtide vitality. When the people were trooping into the wet streets of London from the railway trains early in the morning, I chanced to be on a semi-country road, hurrying through the pelting rain to catch a train. On a new stone pavement washed clean by the rain, I suddenly saw a snail, house on back, stretching the full length of its clean, soft body joyfully on the wet stone. I halted and looked at him.

'Where have you come from, my friend? What are you doing here on this hard paving-stone? Your proper place is in the garden on the other side of this wooden fence, where there is good food and shelter, and cool retreat from the burning sun, and safety from the heels of ruthless wayfarers.'



I stooped down, and gently lifting the snail, popped him over the oak paling into his garden. Now the question is whether in so doing I did right or wrong. You see it was a conflict of duty—duty to the snail who also is a creature of God, and duty to my neighbour whose garden lay under the rain-showers on the other side of the fence. My neighbour, happily, was still an unrisen man, and knew not what had been done. All the way down the hill I thought, not of the neighbour, but of the neighbour's snail, and pictured him eating a succulent breakfast among the young plants of the garden plots. The deed was done on the impulse of the moment. Was it right or wrong? In this case a test and a ray of light are available. Suppose the fence had been my own garden wall, behind which is a spring lettuce-bed. If you ask for the ray of light, see! it is here—'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you.' Are you in the habit of asking the Bible, and asking in prayer, for great answers to the little questions of daily life? Because, if so, when

the great difficulties come you will know how to face them.

Permit me to tell another small story. There is a great spaniel whose home is a house set in a beautiful garden. He is too old and fat to leap the iron railing that guards the garden, or to force his way through the iron gate. I fancy that, like some other dog-friends of mine, he has formed incurable habits of wandering. At all events, now and then in the early morning, as I pass, he is a melancholy object outside the gate. He knows me quite well, and looks up into my face pitifully, beseechingly. His speech is silent, but eloquent and unmistakeable. He asks that the gate may be opened. Then it is that there comes the conflict of duties—the duty I owe to the dog who knows me, and is so friendly, and so forlorn after his night wandering, and so liable to be stolen by his brother tramp; and the duty I owe to the neighbours who own the dog and the garden, and are fast asleep behind the drawn window-blinds. This pathetic little comedy has happened once

and again. How it ends I dare not tell you. It is only named here as an illustration of that casuistical difficulty which so often occurs in human life—a difficulty affecting smallest duties, and sometimes very momentous duties.

It is in the time of April rainfall and sunshine, when life is astir, when snails and other creeping things innumerable, and creatures that fly, and beasts of the forest, and human creatures also, are under the potent influences of springtide life, that all sorts of questions arise concerning which we need to think, and for the solution of which there is often no remedy save that which is suggested by the Apostle who, through all his life, more, perhaps, than any other disciple of Jesus, if we may judge from his letter, was harassed by spiritual difficulties. 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.'

One Sunday afternoon I went to a little schoolhouse that belongs to the Society of Friends. My friends who conduct the

children's service had planned something special and very important. But just before the time of meeting the windows of heaven opened and the rain fell, not in a gentle shower, but in a drenching deluge. And it lasted long enough to spoil the attendance, and to make the singing that had been planned quite impossible. It was a grievous disappointment; but instead of murmuring at this dispensation of the heavens, we considered the wonderful ways of God, who makes all things, even those that are most contrary to our desires, and apparently to the very necessities of our life, work together for good. And there came to my recollection a passage from the *Life of Mr. Gladstone*, which only a week or so before had been published. Mr. John Morley, in telling the story of the Repeal of the Corn Laws, describes how, at the critical moment when every one in England was wondering what would be the outcome of the great discussion in Parliament, the heavens opened, and the rain began to fall upon the fields white unto harvest, and for one whole fortnight

it rained without ceasing. The farmers were in despair about their crops, and the people, hungry for bread, were filled with terror lest the spoilt harvest should mean a still further rise in the already high price of corn. But it was this flood of rain which, in the good providence of God, settled the great question once for all, making it possible for Cobden and John Bright and Sir Robert Peel to carry the Repeal of the Corn Laws, which gave to the people of England cheap bread. The farmers did not think so at the time; but was not that, for all the people of England, a gracious rain?

## ICE

**F**RANKLY, I confess cowardice. Heights and depths, ice, and all 'slippery places,' are a terror. It has seemed to me that only those with a vocation should venture limbs and lives on the high places of the earth.

But always the facing of terrors is the way of victory, and it is wonderful how much a person who is all nerves may endure and do on dizzy heights, down fearsome depths, and over ice-clad rocks.

There are nerves and nerves. The muscles brought most into play in climbing upwards are said to differ from those which come into greatest use when descending mountain paths. So also the nerves that play among the common places of life belong to one set, and those needed in exceptional places and perils are apparently



of a different order. A person may be distressingly nervous at home, and bold as a lion abroad. Perhaps there is kindly intercourse between the two sets of nerves, and this may account for the bracing effect of wild holidays spent at the antipodes of pier bands and Punch and Judy shows.

A party of ten, including four ladies and an Irish doctor, set out in the early morning with two guides, two ropes, and two ice-axes. No one was allowed to take personal impedimenta, not even a hand camera. Across the Lütschine, up through the gorge, along a steep, narrow, winding path we came, through wildernesses of pines and flowers, to a hut, where we rested after the long climb, and refreshed ourselves with coffee, bread, butter, and bilberry jam—wholesome faring for mountain climbing.

Around the shoulder of the Mettenberg we trod, or crawled, on awful pathways, above steep banks where the guides found edelweiss growing. Below the banks lay the great glacier that feeds the Lütschine. Presently we came to dizzy ladders, from

which one of our company turned back, as she had fully intended doing from the beginning. For once, some years ago, these same ladders struck her with fright, and she has never since been able to face a ladder. Yet really they are not so terrible as the ladders in Dolcoath Mine, the difference being that at Dolcoath you do not see the depths into which you are going, whereas here you step down and down in a perfect blaze of sunshine, and all the imaginary perilousness of the descent is visible every step. Strange to say, the most nervous person of the company, at this and every other point of special peril, had the nerve of a mountaineer. She took the most dangerous places like a chamois, as did her husband, and their courage helped my cowardice. Afterwards I discovered that the guides, like my friends, were afraid for the elderly coward. They marked his halting footsteps, and not unreasonably doubted his power to cross Alpine difficulties. But when we came to the really dangerous part of the journey, one of the guides was asked

to take charge of him, and it was he—Hans Burgener—who taught him the art of mountaineering, and made it possible for ‘the greatest coward of the company’ to live to tell the story. He held his hand; he taught him where to tread, and how to use to the best advantage the alpenstock with one hand and the rope or the guide’s hand, as the case might be, with the other. Eventually he drove away terror and transformed that which at the outset bade fair to be a prolonged agony into pure enjoyment. But, to be quite candid, in the earlier stages it was an awful experience.

We walked miles upon miles over tumbled ice, leaping crevasses hundreds of feet deep—narrow slits through pure blue depths, with waters roaring far below. And all the while, at intervals, avalanches thundered down the mountains. Not a cloud flecked the sky. And the blue! Never have I seen a blue so intense. Thin sheets of ice on little pools formed only the night before showed how low would be the temperature but for the sun.

No one can imagine what ice really is, or, indeed, pure water, until he has tramped a glacier seamed with rivulets, dotted with insetted crystal goblets, the banks of the rivulets and the rims of the chalices glowing with prismatic colours in the blaze of sunshine. There is no life—nothing but ice and snow and water, and rocks ground to gravel and scattered over the surface. This gravel, together with the nails in your boots and the great alpenstock, iron shod, in your hand, make it comparatively easy to walk over the sea of ice. Only, at every step you must have a care. Suddenly you are on the edge of a crevasse, the sides of which may be fringed with overhanging snow, apparently solid and safe, in reality treacherous.

Madame had been studying guide-books, and had discovered a tale concerning a girl who long ago went with her young husband to an Alpine glacier. Not taking heed to his steps, the bridegroom trod upon one of these crevasse snow fringes, and fell down between the blue crystal walls, and vanished

out of the sight of his bride. Forty years later she went with a new husband, and was drawn by some irresistible fascination to this same glacier. And, lo, the bridegroom of her early youth reappeared at the foot of the glacier frozen in ice and preserved in the bloom of his youth! This gruesome tale Madame told for our encouragement. So I took heed to my steps, or, rather, to the steps of Hans, who to me, more and more as dangers increased, was in very deed a man of God, gentle, kind, cheerful, confident. He made it quite impossible even for the most nervous to be alarmed. He told me to tread where he trod, and assured me that, if I did so, the way would be quite safe. And all the while, as I followed on firmly and with zealous obedience, I thought about my wife and children at home, and about many things in that blessed Word of God which these many years has been a light—the light of great example—to my steps. And all these thoughts and memories were, somehow, woven up with Hans' great legs and mighty hands, and with the Hands of God,



and with His storehouse of snow and ice, from which flow rivers of living waters for the refreshment of half Europe. I could have written sermons by the dozen concerning the thoughts that came unbidden as we passed from point to point over this sea of ice surrounded by gorgeous heights and canopied by the great blue of heaven. You could not help thinking, and wondering, and hearing voices from the past, and mystic whispers of God's great power and His everlasting love.

We found one crevasse into the depths of which the sun shone. It was mid-day and midsummer, so that we could see deep into the crystal walls glowing with ruby and amethyst tints. Into the far end of this crevasse rushed a cascade of water—a little river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from underneath the enthroned and everlasting snows that seemed to be so near at hand ; and the river tumbled joyfully over hummocks of clear ice, and all around tiny rivulets, running the same way through narrow ice beds, came to join the brimming river,



until at last all found their bourne in the wide crevasse.

One of the crevasses was still more wonderful. You looked straight down a well, square-sided, but with rounded corners—a well a thousand feet deep, with walls of absolutely clear ice, reaching down to the bottom of the glacier, where it rested on the bare rock of the mountain. On one side of this well the perpendicular wall was indented something like the rifling of a cannon. Sheer down, a thousand feet, with a roar like thunder, fell a broad stream without speck or fleck, so pure that it could not produce a single bubble; and as it fell I thought of it going at God's bidding to gladden the thirsty souls of men toiling in the burning sunshine under a cloudless heaven of steel blue.

As we crept along, with feet in Arctic cold and heads in tropical heat, I was as much overmastered, through sheer foolishness of ignorance, as any drunkard. I could not pass the inlet chalices of water in the ice or the tiny rivulets without stooping to take a

sup in the hollow of my hand. Delicious ! It is not the word for it. I never knew till then the exquisite luxury of pure cold water, and, may I add, never knew the temptation that assails the drunkard. If once you begin to sip the water or to taste the ice you are lost. A burning thirst seizes you. Every stream, every cup of cold water, becomes a public-house. You drink and cannot help drinking. The more you drink the more you want to drink. And a madness of exhilaration is upon you. Up unto the hills you lift your eyes, and long to shout to the thunder of the avalanche, and long to climb higher and ever higher.

In front and to the right of us rose the vast amphitheatre which I could see from my bedroom window. The top was curved, here and there, into peaks or horns of bare rock, and corniced with frozen snow, hollow underneath, scooped out by myriad sun-rays beating upon it all day. The cornice of frozen snow to this inconceivably vast temple may be one or two hundred feet in depth. You cannot tell. No guide or

member of the Alpine Club would be mad enough to explore so perilous a height. The yellow rock on which the temple-cornice is bedded and the blue sky overhead unite to tint it delicate pale green. It is a long, curved mountain crest—above a vast amphitheatrical temple of snow and rock. Some day the cornice will break, and the thunder of the fall will shake the mountains, and, likely enough, shatter the up-piled rocks below; and the huge masses of snow shivering out of their places will descend upon the Eismeer glacier—an avalanche transforming the whole appearance of things. For the amphitheatre under the green snow cornice holds countless millions of tons of frozen snow heaped in masses, from which great flakes ever and anon break away. We saw one of these curious operations from start to finish at a moment when we chanced to be comparatively near and were looking upon the scene. A slice of the snow-mass had loosened. It came away bodily, fell, and rolled into white billows, exactly like the waves of the sea, which on a stormy day

tumble one over another until they break into surf and spray on the shore ; only this happened on a precipitous mountain-side, and it ended in sheets of snow-spray sweeping downwards with reverberating thunder towards the glacier. In the middle of the amphitheatre is a great square upstanding rock. The guides say the rock is hot, and that snow is never seen to rest upon it. But no one dare imperil his life by climbing and laying a hand upon the mystic rock. On the right of the rock lay the inconceivably great masses that provided avalanches at intervals all day.

To complete the scene, imagine an environment of mountains, here snow-clad, there pine-clad, and here again bare rock ; and always overhead the blue of the sky, and below, running down the twisted valley, a broad glacier riven by fissures, seamed with streams, and dusted over all its surface with rocks, slate, gravel, earth, the results of blinding winterstorms and small avalanches that have come down from the steep slopes right and left.

At last we came to a point on the glacier beyond which we could not have travelled without risk of being caught in an avalanche. Should we return the way we came? Or would we like to climb over snow ridges and softly-rounded mounds on the left, and up a steep ascent of loose shale to the mountain-side flanking the valley?

The two guides, Christien Bohrn and Hans Burgener, held a council.

Let us picture the two men. They are bronzed, sturdy, not tall, but strong, the perfection of health and fearlessness. They wear thick brown serge-like cloth coats and trousers, and felt hats. Each man carries a coil of rope over his left shoulder and an ice-axe in his right hand. The latter is a short alpenstock, iron-shod at one end and armed at the other with a sharp, short pick, and a narrow axe opposite. Pick and axe form a handle when the staff is in use as an alpenstock; reversed, the pick, driven into a wall of ice or rock, gives a hold to the climber, or the axe cuts steps in the ice.

The guides consulted in German, glancing

from time to time in the direction of the greatest coward of the party — not the women, though one of them, heedless of all counsel, had come out in low brown shoes instead of hobnailed boots. Finally the guides arrived at a definite conclusion, and proceeded to rope us into two parties. Christien Bohrn, one of the most experienced guides in the valley, went ahead, exploring, hewing his way with ice-axe, and returning with a good report. To my anxious inquiry he replied, ‘There is no great difficulty. It is quite safe. You’ll manage it. Hold on to the rope with your left hand, and drive your alpenstock well into the ice.’

So on we went, Christien and his little company in front and Hans Burgener following. I was roped next to him. He had proposed roping as number three a stalwart young man, but, at my special request, Madame, in whose nerve and sure-footedness I had perfect confidence, was roped next, then the Chancellor, who, in climbing, was scarcely less reliable than his wife, and, finally, the young fellow. How helpful it is



in all the pilgrimage of life, and most of all in moments of peril, to feel that your friends are close at hand! And these comrades of mine were friends indeed. They did not say much, but just dropped a cheery word now and then. Only, as I told them, my greatest friend in the world as we passed in slow procession over the ridges of ice and snow was Hans. It begat confidence to gaze upon him. What legs he had! What a shoulder to lean upon at critical times! What a grip! Once, when we were in comparative safety on a level snow plateau, I told Madame to steal up close, and I would whisper an observation which she could whisper to her husband behind. Up she came along the rope. Hans was in front, and at the moment in no anxiety about his company. 'When I go home,' I whispered, 'I mean to run my red pencil through one sentence in the Bible.' 'What is it?' she whispered back, horror-stricken at so strange a proposal. 'This: "He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man,"' and I pointed to Hans.

For some time nearly every step had to be cut in the ice. Hans re-cut extra deep tracks for us, and, of course, our heavily-nailed boots (without which no traveller ought ever to attempt this mountain climbing) drove deep into the ice, and each person passing made the foothold safer. Ah! you Sunday-school teachers, and preachers of all kinds, can you not understand how many thoughts were suggested by these footsteps in slippery places?

We were never, I suppose, in any real peril, though we should have been if a cloud had swept down from the mountain heights. We were then seven thousand feet above sea level, and as we climbed ever higher the cold became so intense that even the midsummer sun only succeeded in thawing slenderest rivulets in the ice. But above us rose still loftier mountains that only members of the Alpine Club would venture to climb.

The mode of progression is quite simple, and when you have got into the way of it, and experience has created confidence in the

guide, fear passes away. What happens is this: You drive the alpenstock into the right side of the ridge along which you are climbing, and hold on to the rope by the left hand, it forming a kind of rail; then you ponder the path of your feet, going step by step solidly without a quaver, and when you come to a wide crevasse you leap, and the guide seizes your hand.

And so we passed from ridge to ridge until we came to the far end of the ice and snow, when we had to scale a small shale mountain which, because of the stones slipping under our feet, was desperately hard work. And, lo! at the top forget-me-nots blue as heaven greeted us, growing in little clumps among the deep grey shale. On a grassy bank we rested while the guides rolled up the ropes and lit their pipes. And all the rest of the way was on pleasant paths radiant with flowers, save when we climbed the ladders or glissaded down a snow bank.

## THE PASTOR

**H**IS name? I do not know it, and although thrice I saw him, and many times heard his fame, it never crossed my mind to ask the name. Once see the man and you would never forget him. Meet him anywhere, in any quarter of the globe or in any attire, and you would recognize him, even though it might be a day of battle or the Day of Judgement. He is a Swiss Pastor.

My first sight of him was casual, unconventional, and highly instructive. A choral society, apparently from a neighbouring mountain parish, came for a week-end visit, and was entertained in the assembly room of our hotel. It was Saturday night. Elders of the Kirche in sober-suited brown were present, and stalwart young men and comely maidens. They sat at three tables planted

at the lower end of the hall, leaving the upper end and the platform clear. Red wine of the country in small quaint decanters, and ice-cold water, and, for the men, cigarettes. At intervals there was much clinking of glasses, and occasionally an uprising and uplifting, with cries of 'Hoch! Hoch!' Conversation flowed freely, with laughter and song and dancing: (I tell what happened without either approval or disapproval.) The proprietor of the hotel, with his wife and kinsman, head waiter, manager, and two waitresses—class distinctions being ignored in this free land—sat as spectators in a side gallery, to which coign of vantage a few visitors were also admitted.

In dreary streets of London I have heard a far-away reminiscence of the quaint Swiss song that rolled in waves of harmony through the hall and stole through open windows as I climbed the stairway. But how very far away! When next I hear it in court or alley, I shall better understand the ancient plaint—'How shall we sing the

Lord's song in a strange land!' You cannot realize how truly it is the Lord's song until you hear it in the roar of the L<sup>ü</sup>tschine, or where the wind sighs among mountain pinewoods and goat-bells tinkle in rock-fenced pastures. Then you understand its genesis, the origin and meaning of its wail, its turns of melody that no lowland voice can imitate, its bird-like trills.

There seemed to be no programme, or chairmanship, or preconcerted plan of entertainment. Two or three girls rising from their places would go to the platform, men following. One of the latter conducted. The glees—mostly songs with choruses—were unaccompanied and charming. The voices, all carefully trained, were in several instances singularly rich in quality. The leading soprano voice rang out from behind the choir—a voice of faultless beauty that all delighted to honour, and that fascinated the English visitors. We all hoped to hear it alone, but this was not permitted. The girl 'played the game,' and so sang as to bring out the quality of her comrades.



For reasons not difficult to guess, this one voice was chosen to receive the honours of the evening. The Pastor left the hall, returning with a large cardboard box. Presently he rose to speak. They heard him in solemn silence for awhile. Suddenly his mood changed. Loud laughter filled the hall. The box was opened. A wreath of Alpine roses appeared. Crossing to the place where she sat, the Pastor put the wreath over the fair head of the girl, continuing his speech. An elderly man, probably her father, rose to reply, maintaining a ripple of humour with lapses into Alpine solemnity so characteristic of old and young in this land of mystery and splendour. Thereupon followed a stately clinking of glasses and more songs and graceful dances, and everything was homely and becoming—an object lesson in simple courtesy and artistic frolic. It all gathered round the Pastor (who neither sang nor danced), the young fellow with shaggy auburn hair who led the music, and the comely girl with laughing face wreathed in mountain roses,

whose voice was the joy and pride of the valley. I did not wonder greatly what the Lord of Cana at His coming would say if He found His servants so doing.

The Wetterhorn in sunlight, snow, and white cloud. The Pastor's parish church, with radiant garden graves in the foreground. Swiss peasants and a few white-costumed visitors strolling churchwards; also little groups from mountain chalets. Little wonder that Madame, lured by such sights, and still under the spells of Saturday evening's music, turned her back on the English Church and the eminently practical Chancellor, and turned her face towards the, as yet, unravelled mysteries of the Zwinglian parish church. Besides, she had heard that a baby was to be christened. The baby, who, I regret to say, proved to be wholly mythical, was the determining factor in the business. Madame's 'reasons why' were invincible. I drummed on the doors of memory for Zwinglian Reformation lore, and for such fragments of schoolboy German

as might have survived the rush of numerous years. We crept noiselessly into the church, and sat afar off, discovering to our dismay that, unwittingly, we had done violence to the old Methodist custom prevailing—men to the right, women to the left. The blunder was past repair, except at the cost of an unseemly disturbance.

The church is severely plain. In the west gallery worship the guides—bronzed and muscular men, who take their lives in their hands, and, as I had reason to know, are gentle as they are strong. Some reach old age and a peaceful retirement. But some are stricken by lightning on lonely peaks, or are swept down rocky slopes by thundering avalanches, or are ice-buried in fearsome crevasses. Memorials of them may be seen in the garden ground outside the church.

The people stand to pray and sit to sing. The pews are hewn tree-trunks curiously mounted and backed. An organ fills a large space at the eastern end of the church.

It is mounted on a narrow platform with a plain rail and a few severely square stalls below for the seating of elders. In front is a massive baptismal font, the cover of which—plain deal—serves also as a book-board when the Pastor descends from his pulpit. The latter is surely unique among the world's pulpits. It is perched high and against the church's south wall. Imagine a huge, six-sided funnel cut in half and sloped, point down, against a plain wall and surmounted by a spacious box, the whole being painted a dull light green. Above the rim of this quaint pulpit rose the stalwart form of the Pastor arrayed in a gown and bands. The men listened far below with faces turned all ways—faces of immovable gravity. The women, who filled the northern half of the church, being farther removed from the pulpit, could see the preacher's face. Three or four modern pews at the eastern end of the women's section faced the pulpit. In the first of these sat, in all dignity and matronly comeliness, the Pastor's wife, also her children or guests.

After the experience of Saturday night we fully expected to see a large choir and to hear hymns and anthems in abundance. In this we were disappointed. Two men—organist and organ-blower—shared the male side of the orchestra platform, and three girls the female side. One hymn only was sung—number 227 in the 'Gesangbuch.' It followed the sermon. The tune was reminiscent of stately German chorales. Everybody sang, including the Pastor. His rich baritone voice rolled through the church, drawing to itself all other voices, and making one feel that organ and choir were mere superfluities.

The service began and closed with prayer. Hoping still to see the christening of a baby we lingered, and won a rich reward, though not of the kind hoped for. For one hour we saw the Pastor among his boys and girls. He came down from the uplifted pulpit, and slowly marched to and fro. The grown-up people went their way, and the children trooped in and filled the massive tree-trunk pews, boys to the right,



for the most part dressed to match their brown hands and faces, and girls in neat frocks and pretty hats to the left. The Pastor was among them as a nurse that cherisheth her children. He laid his hand on a curly head here, and halted to ask a question there. He knew every boy in the place, and every girl. You did not need to ask whether they loved him. They looked up into his handsome face as into the face of a father. He talked to them, prayed, catechized, led them with his glorious voice in the singing of another stately German chorale, and, finally, as a reward for good behaviour, offered to read them a poem—probably of his own composing—at which there was a rustle of approval all over the church, and the children sat up, listening intently.

We went forth from the Church of the living to the Church of the sainted dead. In that fair God's Acre, under the eternal snows of the Wetterhorn, every grave is a little garden. English and Swiss, guides and visitors, French and Germans, lie side



by side, or in the same grave. The solemn mountain and the spired church share the silent watch over the dead. One grave every visitor goes to with reverent foot-step and tears of sympathy. Its marble has a sculptured cross and crown with the inscription—‘May Jesu’s Cross be Miriam’s Crown!’ A chair stands among the flowers in the iron enclosure. Every evening an old lady is led to the grave, where she sits in lonely sorrow. She has wept herself blind.

An hour later we saw the Pastor for the third and last time. We were in the verandah that overlooks the highway. From the church came the Pastor, his wife, and their children following. He was dressed in uniform and strode through the village—the observed of all observers. We were told that he was on his way to join the colours of his regiment and take the week of service which every Swiss citizen proudly gives to his country—a country that has no standing army, and needs none.

We were told further, that the sobriety and thrift and prosperity of the village were in no small degree the result of the personal influence and teaching of this Pastor of the Zwinglian Church.

## BLUE-EYES

**I**N her mother's arms, far up on the lower slopes of the Faulhorn, I first saw her.

The chalet is almost on the frontier between the meadow-land, where Alpine wild flowers rival Alpine grasses in riotous profusion, and the broad belt of pinewoods, where the bed-rock first appears on which the Faulhorn rests.

All the mountain names mean something, and often the meaning is a picturesque description of actual facts. 'Faulhorn' geologically indicates the prevailing character of the vast mass that confronts the Wetterhorn, the Mettenberg, and the Eiger, and that overlooks the Grindelwald Valley. It is mainly a mountain of shale, of rotten rocks, in one section revealing, in its tilted and contorted strata—precipitous, bare, black,

scaly—descending into horrid depths—the terrific forces which, millenniums ago, uplifted it from a ruined world to become in after ages a fertile land, a reserve of wood and water, a sunny height from which men might see as in a vast panorama the snow-clad peaks of the Bernese Oberland; and see also the sapphire glaciers mantled and coroneted with everlasting snow; and strands, lace-like, of living water seaming the mountains, as they fall into green valleys; and rivers, roaring over boulders; and lakes, like the glaciers that feed them, blue as heaven. Alpine climbers think little of the Faulhorn, because anybody able to tramp ever upwards for five or six or seven hours can take the journey, and no guides or ropes or ice-axes are needed; and there is no danger, unless, indeed, you leave the well-defined path and wander away among treacherous snow-drifts and shaly precipices. But for people who cannot qualify for the Alpine Club nor so much as leap a crevasse, the Faulhorn is a joy and wonder. From the Wetterhorn, the Eiger, or the Jungfrau you may probably

see as much, but scarcely more. And here you see it without risk to life or limb, and without cost save for *café complet* at the Halfway House, and the best pea-soup in Europe when you reach the summit. And the flowers! A lady sitting next to me at dinner insisted that no gentian could possibly excel, in depth and brilliance of blue, the gentians cultivated in her own Berkshire greenhouse. But she had never then seen the gentians seven or eight thousand feet above sea level on the Faulhorn, where rock in solution feeds them, and the bluest of blue heavens is their summer canopy, and their roots or seeds are sheltered through winter months under blankets whiter than Witney ever turned out from its wonderful factories.

Flowers, Madame! Do you not dream of them by night? Think of the gold of the rock roses, and the red of Alpine rhododendrons, and the pink of tiny azaleas; of white ranunculus and grass of Parnassus; of forget-me-nots and saxifrages and butterworts; of buttercups and daisies, pansies,

and hare-bells—and orchids! They are nothing thought of in the glory of this garden of God. Only, I pray you, earnestly, do not, through all the years that lie before you, forget this—and make your sisters and children and brothers understand its innermost meaning, this—that the nearer you come to the whiteness of driven snow and the blue of heaven, the richer the colours of the flowers that God Himself has made to grow in this watered garden.

And the tiny sweetheart lying in her quaint little *châlet* cradle—is it any wonder that her face is as the face of a mediaeval saint, and her eyes of heavenly blue?

My introduction to the child was in this wise. My friend the Chancellor of our Exchequer and I had gone forth that Sunday afternoon to breathe the mountain air and bask in the sunshine. Strolling an hour ever upwards we came to a *châlet*, the side balcony of which flanked the mountain bridle-path.

A Swiss peasant's *châlet* is built for comfort in all seasons, and with an eye to



economy of space and usefulness. It almost invariably has at least one sheltered gallery outside, with cosy corners partly open to the sun and wind, and partly (in the better class of houses) closed in with window frames, thus making cubby-houses or conservatories. In these galleries, on summer evenings, women and young girls sit knitting or making pillow-lace. In the early morning you may see the bedding of the family sweetening in the sunshine, while under-clothing is washing itself in the long out-hewn tree-trunk that forms a water-trough through which a mountain stream of ice-cold water is always running. Here neighbours discuss affairs, and flowers bloom, and children play in safety.

It was here, in the *châlet* side-gallery or balcony, that a mother sat in the shade (for the sun had gone round to the west). She was meditatively watching the strangers as they slowly climbed the *bridle-path*. She was nursing her baby, and the peace of God lay upon her bronzed face. The child's eyes shone as shines the great heaven of blue

above the *mer-de-glace* under the Shrecken-horns. When I pointed from baby's eyes to God's heaven, the mother's strong face broke into smiles, and I saw that she was beautiful with the beauty that lasts far on into old age—a beauty that never fades, but grows lovelier, like the Alpine flowers, the nearer it comes to the stainless snow and the everlasting heavens. And the child, gazing intently into the face of the English stranger, blessed him with laughter, and we made friends. The next morning, when Madame, the Chancellor, and the Professor climbed the Faulhorn, little Blue-Eyes was brought from her bed to greet the three; and when they returned late in the afternoon, she greeted them again. By this time we were fast friends.

Next to the mountains and the glaciers nothing in Switzerland more impressed me than the homes of the people and the people themselves. I saw neither beggar, lord, drunkard, nor unmannerly child. In vain I searched for an uncomely dwelling-house for man or beast, or for an untidy

garden. Standing alone one day on a green mountain plateau under the Jungfrau and the Silverhorns, I saw the Lütschine winding like a silver thread through the Grindelwald Valley. And as in the hollow of God's hand nestled the homes of the people—hundreds of chalets built of red pine, without paint or plaster, with wide-eaved roofs and outside stairways and galleries, with picturesquely planted gardens, and patches of rye and barley, with rich meadow-lands and copses and pinewoods—a land of fountains and brooks springing out of valleys and hills, with one church (for the English church did not count) and one school—the home of a free people who, while empires have risen and fallen, have remained unconquered and unconquerable, a people simple, frugal, laborious, fearless. No waste land. Every square foot, even in heights that we should call inaccessible, diligently cultivated. No squandering of Nature's forces. Mountain torrents saw the pine-logs for chalet-building and winter fuel. The people need no candle or light of lamp,

or will need none a few years hence. They lift up their eyes unto the hills whence cometh their help, and God lightens their darkness, and wings their words from height to height, and carries their guests on mountain railways that know no accident—lines that climb dizzy gradients and rush impossible ledges, and are slowly making a way through rock and ice to stupendous mountain peaks. For much of this now, and for all of it in a little while, not one ounce of coal is burnt. Far down in the lovely valley you see a chalet-built power-house, and instead of a trail of black smoke defiling the scene, there is a streak of silver down the mountain slope.

Nor is God's great gift of beauty ignored or belittled. Instinctively the people so built as to enhance, not destroy, the loveliness of the scenery. Even their barns are beautiful, so are their goat-sheds and hewn water-troughs, and the piling of logs for winter fires, and their beehives. Sometimes the hives rest on shelves under broad eaves, and sometimes are like toy-chalets in sheltered garden

nooks. Because of its exceeding comeliness I one day photographed that which by all English law and custom ought to have been an example of sheer ugliness—a laundry. In Grindelwald village, where are the butchers' shops? I could not find one. So surpassingly lovely was the churchyard that I went again and bestowed upon it twelve dry plates, or more. The shops are a dream, and the restaurants corners of paradise. Hush! A young girl is singing. On a grassy bank that fences in her mother's garden she is arranging mountain roses. Her voice is like the trilling of birds and the splashing of waterbrooks. The first night of our visit the rain fell pitilessly, and a string band played under the verandah. By the space of one hour, out on the wet road, stood matronly women and sober-suited girls, not flirting and giggling, but patiently listening to the music that came only at long intervals. Music they love, as well as beauty and freedom.

Artistic cottages are not always clean or commonly decent. Wandering among the



homelier mountain châteaux I desired greatly to see the inside of one. Madame, I humbly suggested, was the proper person to negotiate an inspection. She professed shyness—and she a woman who leaped crevasses, and trod with fearless step along snow ridges, and swept round rocky ledges as around her dining-table at home! She feared to face an irate Swiss house-wife. The Chancellor, when I appealed to him, took refuge in the plea that strangers, English though they might be, had no right to intrude. ‘How would you like a party of Swiss peasants,’ said he, ‘to knock at your door and crave permission to see your family at home?’ But Miss Coote—at Dr. Lunn’s request our friend and adviser-in-chief—took an entirely different view. She has lived in the valley ten years, and knows the people. ‘They will like to show you their homes,’ she said. Therefore I determined to be courageous. Besides, I was pining to see little Blue-Eyes again.

So, on the last morning, rising early and leaving my shy friends to wrestle with bills



and baggage, I sallied forth with my little Dallmeyer camera, and again climbed the foothills of the Faulhorn. It was a faultless morning. On the Wetterhorn, above the Peak of Tempests, one last white cloudlet was folding its tent like the Arabs and silently stealing away. The Upper Glacier with its tumbled masses of frozen snow glowed in the early sunshine. Already nut-brown men and women were going forth to their labour in the hayfields. Most of the meadow-lands had lost their wealth of summer flowers and grasses. Even fringes of greenery on either side of the steep bridle-path had paid tribute to the thrifty peasant-farmers. The goats milked were away in the upper pastures ringing their square little bells—a treble tintinnabulation of the deep diapason of the great cow-bells. Past châteaux, sheds, and water-troughs, turning at every turn in the winding path to catch new glimpses of the mountain panorama behind, I climbed, higher and ever higher towards the dark belt of pinewoods, until, close to the pathside, I saw the last of the châteaux,

and a little brown maiden in red and grey busy on the house front. Up the steps I climbed into the side gallery. Before I knocked at the open door, the mother greeted me. She knew why I had come. One word on the threshold told me that. Baby Blue-Eyes was still sleeping in her cradle. The eldest girl, who learns English in the school, as do most of the children, helped out our fragmentary conversation. 'Might I come in? Might I see the baby asleep in her bed?' 'Certainly. Come, and welcome.'

From the house-place where I imagine most of the indoor domestic work is done, we passed into an inner chamber, large and fair. In the centre, midway between two beds, stood a quaint old cradle swung as between two trees. In that dainty little cot one could believe that many generations of blue-eyed mountain babies had slept. As I noiselessly stole to the cradle-side, the child opened her eyes and laughed.

Whilst I was setting up the camera near the water-trough, the mother with incredible rapidity transformed the baby, herself, and

the two girls, presenting a family group. And very bonnie they all looked in Sunday attire, the mother with beautiful braided hair. After the picturing, in which she was solemnly interested, little Blue-Eyes came to me, and would not go away, no, not even to her mother, who was greatly amused, as were the baby's sisters. But to me, a stranger in a strange land, the confidence of Blue-Eyes was a great honour, and a sign not easily forgotten. The very birds trust Englishmen, also the great St. Bernard dogs, and the goats, usually so shy. A sheep—one of the few we saw—followed us some distance through the Mettenberg woods, and boys and girls with the manners of gentle breeding came to us without fear. Surely there is no greater honour that a man can win than the love and confidence of a little child.

We shook hands. I raised my hat, and she, like the lady of Shunem, 'bowed herself to the ground.'

## BALANCE

**M**Y maiden aunts, of whom I have a large collection, adopted and otherwise, desire a discourse on 'balance,' it being the determining force, or lack of force, in their lives, and, I deeply regret to add, a minus quantity in the lives of many friends, theirs and mine.

Aunt Marjorie, who has been visiting her kinsfolk, the other day announced the date of her return home. 'You will come again in the autumn,' I remarked wistfully. 'No,' she replied martyr-like, and added, 'I have this morning been counting my balance.' This same tyrannical consideration limits her otherwise limitless outgoings towards bereft and distraught friends, also towards 'causes' numberless. You watch the play of 'balance' in this one life, now with laughter and now, it may be, with secret tears, for

there are within its compass tragedies small but real, as well as comedies and simple joys ; and they all more or less have affinity with the little bank-book, with the dainty purse that will never be worn out by pressure from within, and with tiny sums—more subtraction than addition—that are conscientiously pencilled every week. Aunt Marjorie knows that in expenditure she can go so far and no farther. She is for ever being tugged by heart-strings and other invisible cords—tugged whither the purse-strings will not let her go. ‘Very sad,’ say her large-minded younger relatives. ‘Why cannot Aunt Majorie, who has no atom of selfishness in her heart, have countless thousands? Think of the good she would do if God made her a millionaire!’ Yes ; perhaps so. But possibly not ; and, after all, He knows best.

Just now Aunt Marjorie and her sisters and cousins and comrades of all degrees—for they are a large clan, and closely knit in Scotch fashion—are working with tireless fingers. They grudge themselves any

pleasure, save the pleasure of for ever doing. I call, pastorally, now and again, and gaze silently in philosophical wonder at the ceaseless toil. If only the balance might weigh heavily on the other side, would Aunt Majorie be sitting here evening after evening, no day duty in the household neglected, with fingers that never weary and eyes that gleam with every addition to the big box that stores the fruit of her industry? I picture her in idealistic freedom, sauntering gracefully to the electric bell. She orders the carriage for eleven, gives a list of West End shops to 'James,' and returns to lunch, having accomplished in two hours, and with sub-royal splendour and munificence, what my maiden aunt of actual life, limited by 'balance,' will accomplish with slow eagerness in two months of winter evenings. But the account does not begin and end in the bank-book, or Regent Street bills, or in stall-holders' balancings. There are grains of pure gold in other scales, sacred and secret, and pearls of price, and things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard.



Her sister, Aunt Miriam, is richer in years and health and other powers of ministration, but she also is often compelled to touch the finger-lever that lifts her fateful balance. It and the conscience within will not suffer her to do all that is in her kindly will, nor to go recklessly train and tram riding among sick babes and worried mothers. We murmur sometimes in our family circle, wondering why the Fates are not kinder. Yet, possibly, it is the very unkindness of limitation that is partly accountable for qualities and sympathies and deeds that make Aunt Miriam the woman she is. A big balance at the bank might unravel the fine lace, and then there would be no 'Aunt Miriam,' whom everybody loves, at Christmas parties and especially when the shadows fall.

With moments to spare I was on my way to Farringdon Street station, when, at the end of a row of coster merchants, I espied in the gutter a whisht man with a small tressel tray. As a draw for his merchandise he was deftly manipulating a

wine cork, two forks, a needle, a threepenny bit, and a glass tumbler filled with water. With incredible dexterity he constructed a kind of windmill, and not only balanced it on the edge of the tumbler, but set it slowly revolving. A man of such ingenuity and patience and control—surely, thought I, his place is not the gutter! Under other circumstances, what part might he not have played in the world's history, balancing empire against empire, and compelling all manner of incongruities to do his bidding? Alas, in him, as in thousands more, an unbalanced mind, an uncontrolled body, or a soul without equipoise, has spoilt life and left the broken shadow of a man, with nothing save a toy and the power to balance it.

Read any history of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. The highway through Europe is thronged. There is much traffic, a mighty uproar of merchants, a gutter with not a little mud, and a continuous spectacle—only on a vast scale—of jugglery and balancing, with empires,

electorships, kings' daughters, dowries, navies and armies, popes and prelates, and 'souls of men' to play with. What rivers of blood, what national debt, what travail of nations, and all to secure the balance of power!

I read to-day's newspapers (it is the month of June, in the year of grace 1905), and lo, the play, ancient yet ever new, is still on the stage. My wan-faced gutter-merchant with japanned tea-tray and paraphernalia of the old juggleries is striving for mastery among forces which, controlled, make for balance, and uncontrolled end in bankruptcy, revolution, and hopeless ruin.

My maiden aunts must not imagine that theirs are the only balance problems in the universe of God. Look where you will, into the curtained back parlour of the village grocer's shop, through a telescope into boundless space where twin stars and constellations of stars revolve their little rounds, or into cabinets where statesmen and kings and Tsars and Mikados play

their game—with royalties, and religions, and mounted knights, and armed castles, and ‘souls of men’ for pawns—and wherever you look, from the infinitely little to the infinitely great, the dominant force is ‘balance.’ It has always been so, and always must be so. Did not Isaiah the great statesman-prophet of Israel see it? Only he saw that which we are so slow to see—the Balance in the Hand of the Lord of Hosts.

There comes to my recollection, out of the long ago, a maiden-aunt story that ran riot among the fancies of childhood, sometimes drawing tears of compassion and sometimes kindling fires of indignation.

Aunt Keziah had a lover. They must have fallen in love long before any of us children were born. And they went on loving until I, the eldest of the next generation, had grown almost to manhood.

It was all balance; or, shall I say, lack of balance?

Aunt Keziah was plump and most comfortable. I remember as though it were yesterday her round, chubby face, that she used to compose into a sternness befitting a maiden aunt at war with a cruel world, but which, in spite of the tragedy of her lot, was evermore lit with love and laughter. Our love for Aunt Keziah was the great unselfishness in our little lives. We never got anything out of it, and never hoped to get anything—no sweets, or toys, or pennies, nothing but love-confidences, over which we wept and laughed and raged, and at night dreamt great epics of tragic heroisms. The whole business from beginning to end—and the wedding day did not come until thirty years had passed—resolved itself into a question of balance. *He* had no ‘balance’ at all, except the uncertainty of a clerkly salary; *she* had a ‘balance,’ but how small, though sure, she never revealed, and it, like her own dear chubby self, was at the mercy of kinsfolk, whom we for her sake hated, but whom she perversely loved and feared and superstitiously revered. The

truth is that when Aunt Keziah was made, the power to hate was left out, and therefore to that extent she was an unbalanced maiden aunt.

As for her lover, we entertained for him emotions of unmitigated contempt. Why did not the man raise a rebellion, or murder somebody, or storm a bank, or, at the very least, bring a coach and four prancing steeds at the dead of night and carry off Aunt Keziah to Gretna Green in triumph? We should then have got wedding-cake or shouting or something else out of the business, and they would have been happy ever after.

But again it was all a question of balance, a fact which brings me face to face with the essential duplicity, if not triplicity, of this great word. He, happily for him, being a clerk on small salary—I never heard the amount, for it is a singular characteristic, common so far as my experience goes, to maiden aunts generally, that whilst often approaching the confines of a full financial statement they never make an actual



disclosure of their affairs : balance, like the number of their hats and gowns, being sacredly guarded against the prying eyes of nephews ; still less will they ever disclose the state of a lover's balance, unless indeed it should partake of millionaire qualities. Therefore, as I was remarking, Aunt Keziah's lover had a balance far too slender to permit the hire of a coach or the purchase of implements needed for burglary or murder. Such methods of escape from the imprisoning environments of thirty years were not to be thought of.

Moreover, there was that second kind of balance, in which the man was rich beyond the dreams of moral avarice. He had a balanced mind. Now that Time has advanced our education, we, the children of that long ago, are able to appreciate the worth of this second balance. In his youth, when indeed little more than a boy, he fell in love with Aunt Keziah, who must have been a pretty girl ; and through all the years, notwithstanding the family flouts and jeers that persistently greeted his suit, he

patiently loved, and never resented opposition, or returned railing for railing, or waxed angry when severe remarks were made concerning the smallness of his salary, or upon the ridiculous way (as we thought it) in which City bankers ignored his existence.

The dear man was 'gone' on Aunt Keziah. All the cousins of all the families concerned used to laugh (in secret) at the forlorn spectacle of this elderly, love-lorn man, with coming baldness concealed by a wisp of hair, sitting, as he had done in boyhood, by Aunt Keziah's side—she touched with grey—surreptitiously fondling her hand. He never once through all the years wavered in his love. And long after they were married, when she through divers sorrows and torments had lost her good looks, I went to see her, and found him absolutely unchanged, still poor, and still rich : poor in siller, but rich in that which is beyond price—the unchanging loyalty of a good man's first and only love. And Aunt Keziah, breathless and not far from the end

of her journey, had only one joy left—his love for her, and her love for him.

Once—and this also is of long ago—there came to our plain little chapel a family near akin to the King of Prussia. They were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, and Methodism, so they told me, was the nearest to their own Church they had so far discovered. They were homely people and highly cultivated, so we bade them welcome, and made friends with their children. The latter, like their mother, being fond of natural history, became enamoured of an aquarium that stood in the front window of our house. It was a little world in which green water-weeds and curious living creatures thrived in peace. The fact that astonished our friends was that this wee world, unlike the big world outside, never grew noisome or unclean. And yet we never changed the water. Twice a day we made a kind of tidal or stormful commotion, and every day a sanitary inspector went his rounds, removing

the litter and adding just enough fresh water to make amends for loss by evaporation. But otherwise, nothing was done. Home Rule prevailed. The water-world automatically on true democratic principles governed itself, and maintained health, wealth, and beauty. It was again a question of 'balance.' Two worlds, like twin stars, strove in friendly rivalry, the result being a perfect balance of life and power.

I sometimes wonder whether that bonnie little prince and his bonnie little sister, now come to years and honours, remember the lessons taught by their English friend's aquarium, and are themselves carrying them out in their own greater world. For surely it is one law, among wee water-weeds and visible and invisible beasties, and Aunt Miriam's greater world, and the world of kingly and queenly rule, and also among measureless suns in the star-depths—the law of 'balance,' God's law governing all things.

This I note, that whatever their faults—and doubtless they all fall short of perfection somewhere and somehow—maiden aunts are

mindful of little things. People of large importance, much occupied by their own great selves, are irritated by what they term 'their fidgety little ways.' Martha-like, they are cumbered with much serving, and troubled by a multiplicity of affairs, their own and other persons. Or Mary-like, they dwell among the aerial sublimities, and think the more about the little things of earth because they have to confess to themselves regretful limitations: from which it follows that the romanceful Marys are not less mindful of the little things of earth and home because they lack the Martha-like capacity for vigorously handling them. And further, I note this, that their dear Lord in His own wonderful way brings them into high places of service, and perfects that which is lacking in them. And this, very often, He does by means of 'balance,' or, as they would say, lack of balance. They are driven, perforce, to think much of little things, and so acquire a capacity for service that sets them in His household side by side with the Marthas.



Little things ! The poetry and usefulness of little things, how wonderful ! Aunt Miriam, for instance, is a perfect genius among the little duties and unconsidered trifles, as men call them (but God never so calls them) of life. Her own estimate of personal usefulness is quite a negligible quantity, and therefore it is, in part, that her voice and hands and even her eyes minister so much, and, I will add, so tune-fully, to our comfort and well-being all round. Miriam could not do what her brothers did. She held not the rod of Moses, nor had she the speech-making gift of Aaron. She could not write an epic poem or even a lyric. She could not play harp or viol. But she could and did compose a chorus that is ringing down the ages. She could teach her little maidens to dance, and could herself set the measure, with a lowly but useful instrument. 'And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing



ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.' Relatively Miriam's part was small—very small; yet was it not essential—the one thing needful? And it abides, an imperishable fact in the world's history.

I would like to bring Aunt Miriam and Aunt Marjorie and the Prince and Princess and Theodora, and all the other people concerned in this true history of small and common things, to the wee water-world, and for this reason: it is a wellnigh perfect example and illustration of balance. You see it has glass walls, here and there green-tinted, and miniature rocks also green with colonies of minute plants, and a bed of fine gravel out of which or out of the rock crannies spring green water-weeds. It does not matter whether the aquarium is marine or freshwater—the principle is the same. At first there was some difficulty in keeping the water clean and sweet. But little by little the balance between plant-life and animal-life adjusted itself, and all the

processes of nature were carried on decently and in order. Some of the processes you can see ; and quite likely because they are visible you think them supremely important. But in reality they are not so great as the altogether innumerable little affairs and forces that ceaselessly are fulfilling the mightiest and most mystical ministry of all. You can watch the water-snail with rasp-like tongue devouring green fields of confervae on glass walls and smooth pebbles. And when the sun shines, you can see silver globules of pure oxygen fringing the delicate sprays of green water-weed. But you cannot see the cell division, and rotation of protoplasm, and silent storing of chlorophyl in the plant world, or the still more wonderful doings among the infusoria and rotifers and bacteria that by countless millions in infinitely little ways are fulfilling their destiny and carrying on God's great law of balanced life.

In the beginning of the Church's great history the leader of apostolic bands was taught in vision, by a sheet let down from heaven full of four-footed creatures, to call

nothing that God had cleansed common or unclean ; and so may we learn the truth, worth, and dignity of little things, and the oneness of our world of daily life with all the worlds of God in all places of His dominion.

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